

INTRODUCTION

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THE *Nibelungenlied* is one of those rare books that have affected the fate of nations and helped a great people to a new deliverance. Its resurrection, that came after a fitful sleep of centuries, to help Germany and the German people to their own real awakening, wears in itself almost the marvellous air of folk-tale. Goethe said that the rediscovery of the *Lied* marked a period in the history of the fatherland. It awoke, as it were, the "inner memory" of the race, and the breath it respired of ancestral grandeur helped to kindle the desire for national freedom that sprang in the heart of the people. We must remember that before Johann Jakob Bodmer published in 1757 a portion of the *Lied* the German reading public had no chance of knowing that there, locked up in its Gothic strong-house, lay this rude epic of the Northern folk. It was not at once, even then, that it realised the strange power of the long-buried book of heroes. Not until the "War of Liberation" had more fully aroused Germany did the sense and voice of it reach the inner ear and consciousness of her children.¹ Indeed, even Goethe had not been at once impressed, while Frederick the Great had found nothing in it that wrought on his robust fibre.

When we look into the birth, growth, and early circumstance of the poem, we see how congenially fitted it was by nature to the genius of the race that finally took it to heart.

The legend of Siegfried, "one of the oldest creations of German imagination," and that of the *Nibelungs* and the famous treasure, fatal to all who owned it, had been growing for centuries before the epic poet gave it form, and the slow, successive periods in the history of the nation may be traced in the gradual evolution of the saga. The home of the saga was among the Franks of the Rhine, but the primitive German form is lost; the oldest version of it known to us comes from the North. It had become national

¹ It is worth note that a cheap edition, intended for the use of soldiers, was published in 1815 by Zeune.

property as folklore long before its legends took shape in the *Nibelungenlied*, and tradition had kept it alive in Scandinavia and Iceland, where the mythical colours in it were longer left bright. History and myth, in fact, have an equal part in the Nibelungen tragedy. Siegfried and Dietrich are the two master-heroes of German tradition. Dietrich is that Theodoric of the Ostrogoths, sung in Saxon and Bavarian folk-songs; he reigned some fifty years after Attila, and his refuge at the Hunnish court is no doubt reminiscent of an actual fact in his father's life. Myth has played with his name, and he is the central figure of the legends which compose the *Lidredhsaga*. In these we now and then find him face to face again with the Burgundians, with Siegfried at their head, as in "Der Grosse Rosengarten" of which Kriemhild is queen. There we see her as a Kriemhild distributing roses and kisses to the victors; not the fierce Kriemhild, slaying and slain, of revenge.

The origin of Siegfried, the Frankish hero, dates back to the majestic days of the pagan gods. The oldest version of the Nibelungen legend is found in the two Eddas and the Volsunga saga. Here Siegfried is known as Sigurd of the Volsungs, the descendant of the god Odin, Kriemhild as Gudrun, and Gunther as Gunnar. Sigurd's youth was not passed at a chivalric court in training for his own knightly deeds, as represented in the *Nibelungenlied*. "The saga of Sigurd's ancestors," writes Grimm, "is characterised by a savagery which points to extreme age: but it shows no sign of the grossness of degraded natures." Sigurd is brought up in the forest by a dwarf, famed as a smith and a magician; he revenges his father's death on the sons of Hunding, and with his sword, Gram, forged for him by the dwarf, he slays a dragon, and becomes master of the great treasure, winning with it the doom that it involves. He leaves it to his wife, and the stealing of the treasure is the secondary cause of Kriemhild's anger, as the story of her revenge is told in the *Nibelungenlied*. Because of it she commits her final hideous act of vengeance, that in its turn brings destruction on her own head. To return to Sigurd, we find in the Northern version that he accomplishes two almost similar deeds of prowess. His awakening of the

Valkyrie, who has been thrown into a deep slumber by Odin, is an heroic version of the tale of the Sleeping Beauty; it is fire and not a hedge of roses that surrounds the maiden, and Sigurd has to pass through the flames to reach her as she lies in slumber on the mountain top. The Brunhild episode, again, when Sigurd offers his friendly services to Gunnar and wins her for him, has no lot or part at first with that of the Valkyrie; but later the legend shows signs of intermingling the two; Sigurd, we find, has to go through fire a second time to win the desperate bride for Gunnar. Another complication is that which makes Sigurd the affianced of Brunhild; a love potion given him by the mother of his future wife, who wishes to keep him at her court, leads him to forget his vows to Brunhild until it is too late.

It was the wilder Norse version, with its mythical elements, that inspired Wagner's *Nibelungen Ring*. He wove his own ethics into the tale, and made it the instrument of his belief that in the theatre lay "the spiritual seed and kernel of all national-poetic and national-ethical culture." In the *Valkyrie* he gives the legend of Siegfried's father, Siegmund, and his sister, known in the old version as "Signy,"—one of the old tragedies of revenge with loyalty to kin as the prime motive. This second part closes with the binding of the Valkyrie, here identified with Brunhild, in her long slumber—

" In meadfast sleep
I seal thee straight;
Who finds thee fenceless on high,
He takes and has thee for wife."

Then as the god closes her eyes—

" A buoyanter beacon
Shall burn for thy bridal
Than ever has blazed for a bride
To fringe the rock
A flame I will save,
With withering clasp
It shall wait for the onward;
The flatterer fly
From Brünhilde's fence!
To gain her is given but one—
Who is freer than I, the god!"

The one, as we know, is Siegfried, and Brünnhilde forgets neither his vows nor her own love; and the *Götterdämmerung* ends with the splendid scene of Brünnhilde mounted on her horse, Grane, leaping on to the funeral pyre of her former lover.

After this the Brunhild of the *Nibelungenlied* appears a tame figure. It must be remembered, however, that the poem gives us no direct clue to the former relations between Brunhild and Siegfried, although her repeated objections to the marriage between him and Kriemhild sound a note of warning, and produce a sense of impending calamity. In the *Nibelungenlied*, Gunther's wife finds it quite insulting enough to have been treated as we are told, and needs no further provocation. The way in which the truth is made known to her makes the insult doubly humiliating. "Then Brunhild began to weep, and Kriemhild tarried not longer, but went with her attendants into the minster before the king's wife. There was deadly hate, and bright eyes grew wet and dim." On the Brunhild and Siegfried motive hangs all the after tragedy. Brunhild treats Kriemhild with scorn: one old account shows us the two bathing in the river, Kriemhild somewhat higher up the stream than Brunhild, who exclaims angrily at having to wash in water that has passed through the other's hair. Affront on affront roused Kriemhild's temper, until in the final quarrel regarding precedence she betrays the secret that her husband had unwarily revealed to her. And so "the discord of two women," to quote Carlyle, "is as a little spark of evil passion, which ere long enlarges itself into a crime; foul murder is done; and now the sin rolls on like a devouring fire, till the guilty and the innocent are alike encircled with it, and a whole land is ashes, and a whole race is swept away."

For the real history that lies behind the final catastrophe of the *Nibelungenlied* we must go back to the total defeat of the Burgundians under Gundicaricus by the Huns in 437. The changed effect of history in the saga is nowhere shown more clearly than in the transformation the *Nibelungenlied* has wrought in Kriemhild's relation to Attila and her brothers.

The loyalty to kin, the supreme virtue of the ancient race,

which as seen in the tale of Signy, mentioned above, was in heroic times a stronger tie than that of husband, made it impossible for the Gudrun of the earlier saga to deal treacherously with her brothers. In this, it is their blood which she avenges on her husband Attila (Etrel); in the *Nibelungenlied* it is her loyalty to Siegfried which goads her on to unnatural, unwomanly crimes. The older version is nearer history, which relates that Attila married for second wife a German princess Hildico, and was found weltering in his blood on the morning after the wedding. His death really arose from natural causes; but it was not long before rumour had settled that Hildico had been his murderess.

In the *Nibelungenlied* the mythological shadows of the saga have largely disappeared, and the ethical element has become more clear. Rudiger sorrowfully fighting against his friends, shows the influence that was gradually reducing the old stern hero legends to the gentler forms of romance. The other figures are still of the older type; Hagen is the typical vassal, to whom loyalty to his master meant any crime or treachery that might serve to advance or protect him. We lose sight of his base conduct to Siegfried as we follow him through the *swift events that follow*; not for one moment does his spirit fail, and he rises by his unflinching loyalty and daring to the dignity of a tragic hero before he falls beneath Kriemhild's murdering hand, who deals death with Siegfried's sword. Uhland points out that "These two most striking figures (Hagen and Kriemhild) are akin in so far as they unite in themselves the qualities that are apparently most contradictory, loyalty and disloyalty, both springing from the same root."

The Siegfried myth, according to a ruling theory in folklore, has been interpreted as a nature myth; a "Light Hero" succumbing to the powers of darkness (the Nibelungs), either a season, or a day and night, myth. Why or how the Burgundians took the place of the Nibelungs it is now hard to say, but as Nibelungs they appear in the second part of the *Nibelungenlied*, and their annihilation is the *Nibelungen Nil*, or, as Carlyle elaborates it, "extreme need, or final wreck and abolition."

If we say that the sagas connected with the migration of

the nations provided the four-square final basis of the Teutonic epic, we must admit that into the historical superstructure were freely worked the shapes of pagan myths. The mythic gods still stood in the niches disguised as godlike heroes and knights; of such was the "incomparable" Siegfried. Christianity and chivalry had been at work on the old barbaric substance of the nation; they were reshaping a little its typical forms, at the time the *Nibelungenlied* was being composed. Nevertheless "the motives are heathen to the core."

Another of the tragic figures belonging to heroic legend that we might have noted in the *Lied* is Hildebrand, at whose hand Kriemhild meets her doom. Hildebrand is familiar to us in the *Hildebrandslied*, the fragment which records the heart-rending combat between the father and the son, who refuses to believe that Hildebrand is his fellow combatant;—a German version of the tale nobly retold in Matthew Arnold's *Solræb and Rustum*.

Greed, savagery, cruel revenge, live in the pages of the *Nibelungenlied*; but they are relieved by the indomitable energy and courage, the devotion, and, above all, by the deep sense of moral justice, which, as Dr. Francke writes, "remains the priceless heritage of the German race and . . . helped under the guidance of Christian ideas to develop a better and nobler state of national existence."

The literary question involved in the writing of the *Nibelungenlied*—that is, whether it is a single and independent work, or a collection of separate songs—has been widely discussed. Lachmann supported the latter view, but was opposed by Bartsch, who gives the middle of the twelfth century as the date when the folk-songs were brought into a whole, this assonanced version being succeeded about the year 1200 by two others, in which rhyme may have been first introduced. The authorship remains uncertain; two or three of the older poets have been suggested, one of these being Kûrenberg, on account of the similarity of his strophe to that of the Nibelungen.

Of the many extant MSS., the three chief are the St. Gall, the Munich (Hohenems), and the Donaueschingen (Laszberg); Bartsch considers the St. Gall represents most

closely the work of the original poet; Lachmann thought the Munich one was the oldest. The *Mt* group of manuscripts is generally acknowledged to represent the older version.

A few words remain to be said about the present prose version by Margaret Armour (Mrs. W. B. MacDougall), whose other and later work in translation includes three volumes in verse of Heine's poems, in themselves a difficult feat to undertake and carry through. The fact that so true a poet and skilled a verse-writer as her original poems and these Heine translations show her to be, should elect to use prose for her medium here, is perhaps its sufficient artistic justification. The argument is well put by no common critic, the late Francis Thompson, who wrote of this prose-version on its original issue: "Save by a heaven-born poet, who should perform on the Teuton epic the miracle which Edward Fitzgerald performed on Omar Khayyam, the *Nibelungenlied* could only be represented for Englishmen in prose—such biblicical prose as that into which Mr. Andrew Lang and his coadjutor rendered Homer. The thing has been done for us at last. A woman, Mrs. Margaret Armour, is the translator. . . . It is hardly gear for woman to meddle with, this hirsute old German epic; yet this woman has made of it better work than most men could do—an English narrative which holds you and strikes sparks along your blood. I, like thousands more, cannot read the crabbed mediæval German; but in this translation I have exulted over genius, authentic genius, brought home to me in my mother tongue."

Simrock's arrangement of the mediæval text, it may be added, is one that has been used for the translation. The translator has followed Bartsch and Niendorf, however, at the end of the twenty-seventh adventure, and in omitting the twenty-three verses given in parenthesis by Simrock at the beginning of the twenty-eighth adventure

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THE FALL OF THE NIBELUNGS

BOOK I

FIRST ADVENTURE

CONCERNING THE NIBELUNGS

IN old tales they tell us many wonders of heroes and of high courage, of glad feasting, of wine and of mourning ; and herein ye shall read of the marvellous deeds and of the strife of brave men.

There grew up in Burgundy a noble maiden, in no land was a fairer. Kriemhild was her name. Well favoured was the damsel, and by reason of her died many warriors. Doughty knights in plenty wooed her, as was meet, for of her body she was exceeding comely, and her virtues were an adornment to all women.

Three kings noble and rich guarded her, Gunther and Gernot, warriors of fame, and Giselher the youth, a chosen knight. The damsel was their sister, and the care of her fell on them. These lords were courteous and of high lineage, bold and very strong, each of them the pick of knights. The name of their country was Burgundy, and they did great deeds, after, in Etzel's land. At Worms, by the Rhine, they dwelled in might with many a proud lord for vassal.

Their mother was a rich queen and hight Uta, and the name of their father was Dankrat, who, when his life was ended, left them his lands. A strong man was he in his time, and one that in his youth won great worship.

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2 The Fall of the Nibelungs

These three princes, as I have said, were valiant men, overiords of the best knights that folk have praised, strong and bold and undismayed in strife. There were Hagen of Trony, and also his brother Dankwart the swift; and Ortwin of Metz; the two Margraves, Gary and Eckewart; Volker of Alzeia, strong of body; Rumolt, the steward, a chosen knight; Sindolt and Hunolt. These last three served at court and pursued honour. And other knights were there, more than I can name. Dankwart was the marshal; the nephew of Ortwin of Metz carved at the board; Sindolt was the butler, a worthy warrior: each did his part as a good knight.

The splendour of this court and its might, the high valour and chivalry of its lords, were a tale without end.

Now it so fell that Kriemhild, the pure maid, dreamed a dream that she fondled a wild falcon, and eagles wrested it from her; the which to see grieved her more than any ill that had happened to her heretofore.

This dream she told to Uta, her mother, who interpreted it on this wise. "The falcon that thou sawest is a noble man; yet if God keep him not, he is a lost man to thee."

"What speakest thou to me of a man, mother mine? Without their love would I still abide, that I may remain fair till my death, nor suffer dole from any man's love."

Said her mother then, "Be not so sure; for wouldst thou ever on this earth have heart's gladness, it cometh from the love of a man. And a fair wife wilt thou be, if God but lead hither to thee a true and trusty knight."

"Say not so, mother mine," answered the maiden, "for on many a woman, and oft hath it been proven, that the meed of love is sorrow. From both I will keep me, that evil betide not."

Long in such wise abode the high, pure maiden, nor thought to love any. Nevertheless, at the last, she wedded a brave man; that was the falcon she dreamed of erstwhile, as her mother foretold it. Yea, bitter was her vengeance on her kinsmen that slew him, and by reason of his death died many a mother's son.

SECOND ADVENTURE

CONCERNING SIEGFRIED

THERE grew up in the Netherland a rich king's child, whose father hight Siegmund and his mother Sieglind, in a castle high and famous called Xanten, down by the Rhine's side. Goodly was this knight, by my troth, his body without blemish, a strong and valiant man of great worship; abroad, through the whole earth, went his fame. The hero hight Siegfried, and he rode boldly into many lands. Ha! in Burgundy, I trow, he found warriors to his liking. Or he was a man grown he had done marvels with his hand, as is said and sung, albeit now there is no time for more word thereof.

Of his best days there were many wonders to tell, how he waxed in goodliness and honour; his, too, was the love of women.

As was seemly for such an one, his breeding was well seen to, and of his nature, likewise, he was virtuous. His father's land was famed for his worth, for in all things he was right noble.

When he was of an age to ride to the court, the people saw him gladly, and wedded wives and maids were alike fain that he should tarry there. By order of Siegmund and Sieglind he was richly clad, and without guards he was suffered not to ride abroad. They that had him in charge were wise men versed in honour, to the end that he might win thereby liegemen and lands.

Now was he grown a stark youth, of stature and strength to bear weapons; he lacked nothing needful thereto, and inclined him already to the wooing of women. Nor did these find the fair youth amiss.

So Siegmund his father cried a hightide, and word thereof came to the kingdoms that were round about. To strangers and to friends alike he gave horses and apparel, and wheresoever they found one of knightly

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birth, that youth they bade to the hightide, to be dubbed a knight with Siegfried.

Many wonders might one tell of that hightide, and rightly Siegmund and Sieglind won glory from the gifts of their hand, by reason whereof a multitude rode into the land. To four hundred sworded knights, and to Siegfried was given rich apparel. Full many a fair damsel ceased not from working with her needle for his sake. Precious stones without stint they set in gold, and embroidered them with silk on the vest of the proud youth. He was little loth thereto. And the king bade them set places for many a hero the mid-summer that Siegfried became a knight.

The rich squires and great knights drew to the minster. Meet is it that the old help the young, even as they in their day were holpen.

The time sped in merriment and sports. First, God to honour, they sang mass. Then the people pressed in hard to behold the youths dubbed knights with such pomp and high observance as we see not the like of nowadays.

Then they ran where they found saddled horses. And the noise of tourney was so great at Siegmund's court that palace and hall echoed therewith, for there was a mighty din of heroes. From old and young came the noise of hurtling and of broken shafts whizzing in the air; and from warring hands flew splintered lances as far as the castle; men and women looked on at the sport. Then the king bade stay the tilting. And they led off the horses. Many shields lay broken, and, strewed on the grass, were jewels from shining bucklers, fallen in the fray.

The guests went in and sat down as they were bidden, and over the choice meats and good wine, drunk to the full, they parted from their weariness. Friends and strangers were entreated with equal honour.

Albeit they ceased not from tilting all the day, the mummers and the minstrels took no rest, but sang for gold and got it; wherefore they praised the land of Siegmund. The king enfeoffed Siegfried with lands and

THIRD ADVENTURE

HOW SIEGFRIED CAME TO WORMS

LITTLE recked Siegfried of heart's dole till that the news reached him of a fair maid of Burgundy, than whom none could wish a fairer ; by reason of her, joy befell him, and sorrow.

Her beauty was rumoured far and wide, and the fame of her virtues, joined thereto, brought many strangers into Gunther's land. Yet, though many wooed her, Kriemhild was firm-minded to wed none. The man that was to win her was yet a stranger.

Thereupon Siegmund's son yearned to her with true love. Weighed with him all other suitors were as wind, for he was meet to be chosen of fair women ; and, or long, Kriemhild the high maiden was bold Sir Siegfried's bride.

His kinsmen and his liegemen counselled him to woo a fitting mate, if he meant to love in earnest, whereto Siegfried answered, "It shall be Kriemhild. So measureless fair is the maiden of Burgundy, that the greatest emperor, were he minded to wed, were none too good for her."

The tidings came to Siegmund's ear. His knights told him Siegfried's intent, and it irked him that his son should woo the royal maiden. To Sieglind, the king's wife, they told it also, and she feared for his life, for she knew Gunther and his men.

They would have turned him from his quest.

Spake bold Siegfried then, "Dearest father mine, either I will think no more on women at all, or I will woo where my heart's desire is." And for all they could say, he changed not his purpose.

Then said the king, "If thou wilt not yield in this, i' faith, I approve thy choice, and will further thee therein as I best can. Nevertheless, Gunther hath many mighty men, were it none other than Hagen, an arrogant and over-

weening knight. I fear both thou and I must rue that thou goest after this king's daughter."

"What harm can come thereof?" answered Siegfried. "What I win not for the friendly asking, I will take by the prowess of my hand. I doubt not but I shall strip him of both liegemen and lands."

But Siegmund said, "I am grieved at thy word. If it were heard at the Rhine, thou durst not ride at all into Gunther's country. Both Gunther and Gernot are known to me from aforetime, and by force shall none win the maiden. That have I often heard. But if thou wilt ride thither with warriors, I will summon my friends. They will follow thee nothing loth."

Siegfried answered, "I will not ride with an army of warriors to the Rhine; it would shame me so to win the maiden by force. I would win her with mine own hand. One of twelve I will forth to Gunther's land, and to this shalt thou help me, my father Siegmund."

They gave to his knights cloaks of fur, some grey and some striped.

Sieglinde his mother heard it, and sorrowed for her dear son, for fear she might lose him by the hand of Gunther's men. The noble queen wept sore.

Siegfried went where she sat, and spake comfortably to her. "Weep not, mother, for my sake, for I shall be without scathe among foemen. Help me rather to the journey that I make into Burgundy, that I and my fellows may have raiment becoming proud knights. For this shalt thou have much thanks."

"Since thou wilt not be turned," spake Sieglind, "I will give to thee, my only child, the best apparel that ever knight did on, to thee and to thy companions, for thy journey. Thou shalt receive without stint."

The youth bowed before the queen and said, "Twelve strong we ride forth, no more. I would have raiment for so many; for I would see with mine eyes how it standeth with Kriemhild."

The women sat night and day, nor rested till Siegfried's mantle was ready; for none could dissuade him from his quest. His father let forge for him a coat of

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mail that might do honour to his land. Bright were the breastplates and the helmet, and the bucklers fair and massy.

Now the time was come to ride forth, and all the folk, men and women, made dole, lest they should return never more. The hero bade load the sumpters with the arms and apparel. The horses were goodly, and their equipment of ruddy gold. None had more cause for pride than Siegfried and his knights. He asked leave to set out for Burgundy, and the king and the queen gave it sorrowing. But he spake comfortably to both of them, and said, "Weep not for my sake; nor fear aught for my life."

The knights were downcast, and the maidens wept. Their hearts told them, I ween, that by reason of this day's doings, many a dear one would lie dead. Needs made they dole, for they were sorrowful.

On the seventh morning after this, the fearless band drew toward Worms on the Rhine. Their garments were woven of ruddy gold, and their riding-gear was to match. Smooth paced the horses, deftly managed by Siegfried's bold warriors. Their shields were new, bright and massy, and their helmets goodly, as Siegfried the hero and his following rode into Gunther's country to the court. Never knights were in seemlier trim. Their sword-points clanged on their spurs, and in their hands they bare sharp spears; the one that Siegfried carried was broad two spans or more, of the sort that maketh grim wounds. Gold-hued were their bridles, their poytrels of silk; so they rode through the land.

Everywhere the folk marvelled, gazing at them, and Gunther's men ran to meet them; proud warriors, knights and squires, went toward the strangers, as was meet, and welcomed the guests to the court of their king, taking horse and shield from their hands. They would have put the horses in the stalls, but Siegfried spake in haste, "Let our horses stand, for I am minded to depart again speedily. Where I may find Gunther, the great king of Burgundy, let whoso knoweth tell me."

One answered him that knew, "Thou mayest see the

king if thou wilt. I saw him amidst of his men in yonder wide hall. Go in to him. Thou shalt find there many brave warriors."

They told the king that a valiant knight, fair equipped and apparelled, that knew none in Burgundy, was come thither. And the king marvelled where these proud knights in shining harness, with their shields new and massy, might hie from. It irked him that none knew it.

Ortwin of Metz, a goodly man of high courage, spake to the king then, "Since we know naught thereof, bid to thee Hagen mine uncle, and show them to him. For he hath knowledge of the mighty men of all lands; and what he knoweth he will tell us."

The king summoned Hagen with his vassals, and he drew nigh with proud step, and asked the king his will.

"Strange knights are come to my court that none knoweth. If thou hast ever seen them afore, tell me thereof truly."

"That will I," spake Hagen, and went to the window, and looked down on the strangers below. The show of them and their equipment pleased him, but he had not seen them afore in Burgundy. And he said, "From wheresoever they be come, they must be princes, or princes' envoys. Their horses are good, and wonderly rich their vesture. From whatso quarter they hie, they be seemly men. But for this I vouch, that, though I never saw Siegfried, yonder knight that goeth so proud is, of a surety, none but he. New adventures he bringeth hither. By this hero's hand fell the brave Nibelungs, Shilbung and Nibelung, the high princes. Wonders hath he wrought by his prowess. I have heard tell that on a day when he rode alone, he came to a mountain, and chanced on a company of brave men that guarded the Nibelung's hoard, whereof he knew naught. The Nibelung men had, at that moment, made an end of bringing it forth from a hole in the hill, and oddly enow, they were about to share it. Siegfried saw them and marvelled thereat. He drew so close that they were ware of him, and he of them. Whereupon one said, 'Here cometh Siegfried, the hero of the Netherland!' Strange

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Also what I have in fee, if thou overcome, shall be thine. With thy country be it even as with mine. To the one of us twain that overcometh shall the whole belong, people and land."

But Hagen and Gernot answered him back straightway. "We desire not," said Gernot, "to win new kingdoms at the cost of dead heroes. Our land is rich, and we are the rightful lords. The folk desire none better."

Grim and angered stood Gunther's kinsmen. Amidst of them was Ortwin of Metz, who said, "This bargain pleaseth me little. Bold Siegfried hath challenged thee wrongfully. Were thou and thy brothers naked, and he with a whole king's army at his back, I would undertake to show the overweening man he did well to abate his pride."

Whereat the knight of the Netherland was wroth and said, "Not such as thou art shall raise a hand against me, for I am a great king; thou art but a king's man. Twelve of thy sort could not withstand me."

Then Ortwin of Metz, the sister's son of Hagen of Trony, cried aloud for his sword. It grieved the king that he had kept silence so long, but Gernot, a warrior bold and keen, came betwixt them.

He said to Ortwin, "Calm thyself. Siegfried hath done naught to us, that we should not end this matter peaceably. I counsel that we take him to friend. That were more to our honour."

Then said Hagen the stark man, "It may well irk thy knights that he rideth hither as a foeman. Better had he refrained. My masters had never done the like by him."

Brave Siegfried answered, "If thou like not my words, I will show thee here, in Burgundy, the deeds of my hand."

"That I will hinder," said Gernot, and he forbade to his knights their overweening words, for they irked him. Siegfried also thought on the noble maiden.

"Wherefore should we fight with thee?" said Gernot. "Though every knight lay dead thereby, small were our glory and little thine advantage."

Whereto Siegfried, King Siegmund's son, answered, "Why do Hagen and Ortwin hang back, and their friends, whereof they have enow in Burgundy?"

But these must needs bold their peace, as Gernot commanded them.

"Thou art welcome," said Uta's son; "thou and thy comrades that are with thee. We will serve thee gladly, I and my kinsmen."

They let pour for them Gunther's wine, and the host of that land, even Gunther the king, said, "All that is ours, and whatsoever thou mayest with honour desire, is thine to share with us, body and goods."

Then Siegfried was milder of his mood.

What he and his men had had with them was seen to; they gave Siegfried's knights good quarters and fair lodging; and they rejoiced to see the stranger in Burgundy.

They did him honour many days: more than I can tell. This he won, I trow, by his valour. Few looked on him sourly.

The king and his men busied them with sports, and in each undertaking Siegfried still approved him the best. Whether they threw the stone or shot with the shaft, none came near him by reason of his great strength. Held the doughty warriors tourney before the women, then looked these all with favour on the knight of the Netherland. But, as for him, he thought only on his high love. The fair women of the court demanded who the proud stranger was. "He is so goodly," they said, "and so rich his apparel."

And there answered them folk enow, "It is the king of the Netherland." Whatsoever sport they followed, he was ready. In his heart he bare the beautiful maiden that as yet he had not seen: the which spake in secret kind words also of him. When the youths tilted in the courtyard, Kriemhild, the high princess, looked down at them from her window; nor, at that time, desired she better pastime. Neither had he asked better, had he known that his heart's dear one gazed upon him: the fairest thing on earth had he deemed it to behold her eyes. When he stood there amidst of the heroes in the

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tilt-yard, as the custom is, to rest at the tourney, so graceful the son of Siegfried bore him, that the hearts of many maidens yearned toward him. And oftentimes would he think, "How shall I attain to behold the noble lady that I have loved long and dearly? She is still a stranger. For this reason I am downcast."

When the rich kings rode abroad, it behoved the knights to go with them, wherefore Siegfried also rode forth, the which irked the damsel sore; and likewise, for love of her, he was heavy enow of his cheer.

So a year (I say sooth) he abode by these princes, nor in all that time had once seen his dear one, that afterward brought him much gladness and dole.

FOURTH ADVENTURE

HOW SIEGFRIED FOUGHT WITH THE SAXONS

Now there were brought into Gunther's land strange tidings by envoys sent from afar by foreign princes that hated him; and when they heard the message they were troubled. The kings were as I will tell you: Ludger of the Saxons, a high and mighty prince; and Ludgast of Denmark, and many bold warriors with them.

These envoys, sent by his foemen, came into Gunther's land, and the strangers were asked their business, and brought before the king.

The king greeted them fair, and said, "I know not who hath sent you hither, and would hear it." So spake the good king, and they greatly feared his wrath.

"If thou wilt have our message, O king, we will tell it plain, and name thee the princes that have sent us. They are Ludgast and Ludger, and will come against thee into thy land. Thou art fallen in their displeasure, and we know that they bear thee bitter hate. They come hither with an armed force to Worms by the Rhine—they and their warriors. Wherefore be warned. Inside of twelve days they will ride. If thou hast trusty friends, let it appear now; let them help thee to keep thy castles and thy country, for, or long, there will be smiting of helmets and shields here. Or wouldst thou treat with them, then declare it straightway, that thy foemen come not nigh thee to thy hurt, and that goodly knights perish not thereby."

"Tarry a while—ye shall have answer betimes—that I may bethink me," said the good king. "If I have true liegemen, I will not hide it from them, but will take counsel with them on this hard matter."

Heavy enow of his cheer was Gunther. He pondered the message secretly in his heart, and summoned Hagen, and others of his men, and sent to the court in haste

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for Gernot. His best knights drew round him, and he said, "Without cause, and with a mighty array, foemen come hither against us into our land."

Thereto answered Gernot, a hardy and bold warrior, "We shall hinder that with our swords. They only perish that fate dooms. Let them die. They shall not turn me from honour. Our foemen are welcome."

Spake Hagen of Trony then, "Methinketh that were unwise. Ludgast and Ludger are proud men withal, and we can hardly in so few days muster our men." Therefore the bold knight said, "Tell Siegfried."

They bade lodge the envoys in the town. Albeit they were his foemen, Gunther, the great king, commanded the folk to entreat them well—rightly he did so—till that he knew the friends that would stand by him.

The king was heavy of his cheer, and Siegfried, the good knight, saw that he was downcast, but wist not the reason, and asked King Gunther what ailed him. "I marvel much," said Siegfried, "that thou takest no part in our sports as heretofore." And Gunther, the doughty knight, answered him, "Not to every man may I declare the secret heaviness of my heart; only unto true friends shall the heart tell its dole."

Siegfried changed colour, and grew red and white, and he said to the king, "I have denied thee naught, and now I would help thee. If thou seekest friends, I will be one of them, and stand to it truly to my life's end."

"Now God requite thee, Sir Siegfried, for I like thy word; and albeit thy might availed me nothing, I would rejoice none the less that thou art well-minded toward me; as much and more will I do to thee if I live. I will tell thee the cause of my trouble. Envoys from my foemen have brought a message that with an army they will come against me; such inroad of warriors hath not been aforetime in this country."

"Be not sorrowful for that," answered Siegfried: "be of good cheer, and do now as I say. I will win for thee honour and profit or ever thy foemen reach this land."

Had thy stark adversaries thirty thousand warriors at their back, and I but one thousand, I would withstand them—trust me for that."

King Gunther answered, "Thou shalt be well paid for this."

"Give me a thousand of thy knights, since of mine own I have but twelve here with me, and I will keep thy land for thee. The hand of Siegfried will serve thee truly. Hagen shall help us in this, and also Ortwin, Dankwart, and Sindolt, thy loving knights, and eke Folker, the bold man, who shall bear the standard: better knight thou wilt not find. Had the envoys return to their country; tell them they shall see us there soon enow. So shall our castles go scatheless."

The king let summon his kinsmen and his liegemen, and Ludger's messengers went to the court. They were glad to be gone. Gunther, the good king, gave them gifts and an escort, wherewith they were well content.

Spake Gunther, "Thou shalt say on this wise to my haughty foemen: They did wisely to turn from their journey, for if my friends fail me not, and they seek me here in my land, they will find work enow."

They brought out rich gifts for the envoys, whereof Gunther had to spare, and these said not "nay." Then they took their leave, and departed rejoicing.

When the messengers were come again to Denmark, and told Ludgast how that the Rhine-men would ride thither, he was wroth at their boldness. They made report to him of the many brave men Gunther had, and how that they had seen a knight there amidst of them that hight Siegfried, a hero from the Netherland, the which was heavy news for Ludgast.

When they of Denmark heard it, they hasted the more to summon their friends, till that Ludgast had ready for the onset twenty thousand warriors withal.

On like manner Ludger of Saxony summoned his men to the number of forty thousand, ready to march into Burgundy.

The same also did King Gunther to his liegemen, and to his brothers with their vassals, and to Hagen and his

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knights. These were sorry enow at the news; by reason thereof many a knight looked on death.

They hasted and made ready for the journey. Brave Folker bare the standard. They purposed to cross the Rhine from Worms. Hagen of Trony led the force. Sindolt and bold Hunolt were there, that they might deserve King Gunther's gold; also Hagen's brother Dankwart, and Ortwin, fit men and worthy for the undertaking.

"Sit thou at home, O King," spake Siegfried. "Since thy knights are willing to follow me, stay here by the women and be of good cheer; for, by my troth, I will guard for thee both goods and honour. I will see to it, that they that seek thee here at Worms by the Rhine bide where they are; we will pierce deep into their country, till their vaunting is turned to sorrow."

They passed from the Rhine through Hesse against Saxony, where the battle was fought afterward. With plunder and with fire they laid waste the land, the which both the princes found to their cost.

When they were come to the marches, the warriors hasted forward, and Siegfried began to ask them, "Which of us shall guard the rest from surprise?" More to their hurt the Saxons never took the field.

They answered, "Let bold Dankwart guard the younger knights. He is a good warrior. So shall we come in less scathe by Ludger's men. He and Ortwin shall guard the rear."

fiercely on each other. I will tell you who he was that kept watch. On his arm he bare a glittering shield of gold. It was King Ludgast that kept ward over his host.

The noble stranger pricked toward him fiercely. Ludgast dressed him also. They put spurs to their horses and smote with all their strength on the shields with their spears, that it was like to go hard with the king. On their horses, pricked forward by the spur, the princes bare down on each other like the wind. Then they wheeled round deftly—these two fierce men—and fell to hacking with their swords. Sir Siegfried smote, that the field rang therewith; the hero with his mighty blade struck sparks from Ludgast's helmet. Fiercely fought the prince of the Netherland, and Ludgast, likewise, dealt many a grim blow. Each drove with all his might at the other's shield. The combat was spied by thirty of Ludgast's men, but Siegfried, by means of three deep wounds and grisly that he dealt Ludgast through his white harness, overcame the king or these knights came up. His sword drew blood with each stroke, that King Ludgast came in evil plight, and begged for his life, offering his land as the price thereof, and said that his name was Ludgast.

His knights hastened to his rescue, for they had seen the encounter at the ward-post. Siegfried would have led him thence, but thirty of Ludgast's men rode at him. With mighty blows the stark warrior kept his rich captive; and soon his hands did even deadlier deeds. He smote the thirty men dead in his defence, save one that fled and told what had happened, the truth whereof was proven by his bloody helmet.

They of Denmark were aghast when they heard their king was taken captive; they told it to his brother, who fell in a great fury by reason of the disaster.

So the mighty Ludgast was taken by Siegfried's prowess, and given in charge to Hagen. When that good knight heard that it was Ludgast he was not sorry.

They bade raise the standard of Burgundy. "Forward!" cried Siegfried, "More shall be done on the day end, if I lose not my life. The Saxon women shall

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see it. Harken now, ye men of the Rhine. I can lead you to Ludger's army. There ye will see helmets hewn by the good hands of heroes. They shall be in evil case or we turn again."

Then Gernot and his men sprang to horse. The banner was unfurled by Folker, the minstrel knight. He rode before the host, and they all made them ready for battle. They numbered not more than a thousand men, and thereto the twelve strangers. The dust rose from their path, and they rode through the land, their shields flashing.

The Saxons, also, were come up, bearing well-sharpened swords. So hath the story been told me. The swords in the heroes' hands dealt grim blows in defence of their castles and their land.

The marshal led the army, and Siegfried was come forward with the twelve men that he had with him from the Netherland. Many a hand was bloody that day in the battle. Sindolt and Hunolt and eke Gernot smote many heroes dead in the fight, that were bold enow till they felt their prowess. For their sake sorrowed women not a few. Folker and Hagen and Ortwin, the fierce warriors, quenched the flash of many helmets with blood. Dankwart, also, did wonders. The Danes proved their mettle, and loud were heard the hurtling of shields and the clash of sharp swords swung mightily. The Saxons, bold in strife, made havoc enow. Wide were the wounds hewn by the men of Burgundy when they rushed to the encounter. Blood ran down the saddles. So was honour wooed of these knights bold and swift. Loud rang the keen swords in the hands of the heroes of the Netherland, when they rode with their lord into the fray. They rode with Siegfried like good knights. None from the Rhine kept pace with him. By reason of Siegfried's hand streams of blood ran from bright helmets, till that he lay on Ludgast amidst of his men. Thrice he pierced through the army of the Saxons, and thrice returned Hagen, by this time, was come up with him, that helped him in his quest. They slew many a brave knight.

When bold Ludger found Siegfried with Balmung, the

good sword, swung aloft, wherewith he made a mighty slaughter, he was wroth, and of his mood full grim. With a fierce rush and clash of swords the warriors came together. So exceeding furious was their onset that the host gave way. Terrible was their hate. The Saxon king knew well that his brother was taken captive, and he was wroth thereat; but he knew it not for Siegfried's work till now. They had blamed Gernot. Now he found out the truth. Ludger smote so hard that Siegfried's horse reeled under him. But when he was come to, Siegfried was more terrible than afore. Hagen and Gernot, Dankwart and Folker, stood by him. The dead lay in heaps. Sindolt and Hunolt and Orwin the knight slew many in the strife. The princes held together in the fray. Bright spears in the hands of heroes flashed above the helmets, that clave the shining bucklers in twain. Many a massy shield was red with blood. In the fierce encounter many men fell from their horses. Bold Siegfried and King Ludger strove together, and lances whizzed, and sharp spears. Ludger's shield-plate flew off through the strength of Siegfried's hand. Then the hero of the Netherland thought to have gotten the victory over the Saxons that were hard pressed. Ha! what polished bucklers doughty Dankwart brake!

Of a sudden Ludger espied a crown that was painted on Siegfried's shield, and he knew the mighty man, and cried aloud to his friends, "Forbear, my men all. I have seen the son of Siegmund, even bold Siegfried. The Devil hath sent him hither into Saxony." He bade lower the standard, and sued for peace. They granted this, yet he was compelled by Siegfried to go captive into Gunther's land.

With one accord they ceased from the strife. They threw down their shivered helmets and shields. Blood-red were they all by the hands of the Burgundians. They took captive, whom they listed, for they had the power.

Gernot and Hagen gave order to convey the wounded on litters. They led five hundred noble knights as prisoners to the Rhine.

The vanquished warriors rode back to Denmark. Nor

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had the Saxons fought so as to win them honour, and they were downcast. The dead were mourned by their friends.

They sent the weapons to the Rhine on sumpters. So wondrously had Siegfried done, that all Gunther's men praised him.

Sir Gernot sent word to Worms, and throughout the whole land, to their friends, how it had sped with them; for as bold knights and honourable they had fought. The pages hastened and told it, and the glad news rejoiced the loving ones that had sorrowed. The noble women ceased not from questioning how it had fared with the great king's men.

Kriemhild bade a messenger to her in secret; publicly she durst not, for to one of them she bare dear heart's love.

When the messenger was come to her chamber, Kriemhild, the beautiful maiden, spake him fair. "Now tell me glad tidings; thou shalt have gold therefor; and, sayest thou sooth, I will ever be beholden to thee. How sped my brother Gernot in the battle, and the rest of my friends? Are there many dead? Who did most valiantly? Now tell me."

Whereto the messenger answered truthfully, "We had no coward among us. Yet since thou wilt hear it, noble princess, none rode in the thick of the fight like the knight of the Netherland. Marvellous was the work of Siegfried's hand. All that the knights did in battle—Dankwart and Hagen and the rest—though with honour fought they all, was but as a wind matched with the prowess of Siegfried, the son of Siegmund. Many heroes have they slain, yet of the deeds of Siegfried, done in battle, none shall tell to the end. By reason of him many maidens mourn for their kin. Low lieth the dear one of many a bride. Loud smote he on the helmets, that they ran blood. In all things he is a knight bold and good.

"Ortwin of Metz, also, won worship. Whoso came within range of his sword lieth wounded or dead. Thy brother, too, made fierce havoc in the battle. To his prowess must all testify. The proud Burgundians have so fought that none may question their honour. For

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unseemly in so great a king. And he asked tidings of his friends, and who were slain. None were lost to him save sixty only, and these were mourned as many a hero hath been mourned since.

They that were unhurt brought many battered shields and shivered helmets back to Gunther's land. The warriors sprang down from their horses before the palace, and there was a joyful noise of welcome.

Order was given to lodge the knights in the town, and the king commanded that his guests should be courteously entreated, and that the wounded should be seen to and given good chambers. So he approved himself generous to his foes. He said to Ludger, "Thou art welcome! Much scathe have I suffered through thee; yet, if I prosper henceforth, I will consider myself well paid. God reward my warriors, for well have they served me!"

"Thou hast cause to thank them," answered Ludger, "for nobler captives were never won for a king; and gold without stint shall be thine, if thou do well by me and my friends."

Said Gunther, "Ye shall both go free. Yet I must have a pledge that my foemen quit not my land till peace be sealed betwixt us." And they promised it, and gave their hand thereon. They led them to their quarters to rest, and saw the wounded men laid softly in their beds. They set before them that were whole meat and good wine, and never were men merrier. They bare the battered shields away into safe keeping; and the bloody saddles, of which there were enow, they hid, that the women might not grieve thereat. Many a weary knight was there.

The king entreated his guests right royally, and the land was full of friends and of strangers. He bade set to the sore wounded ones whose pride was brought low. To them that were skilled in leach craft they offered a rich fee of unweighed silver and yellow gold, that they might heal the heroes of their wounds gotten in battle; the king sent also precious gifts to his guests. They that thought to ride home were bidden stay as friends. And

the maidens that dwell with honour in our midst appear before us. For what shall pleasure or glad a man more than to behold beautiful damsels and fair women? Bid thy sister come forth and show herself to thy guests."

And this word pleased the knights.

"That will I gladly do," said the king; and they that heard him rejoiced. He sent a messenger to Queen Uta, and besought her that she would come to the court with her daughter and her women-folk.

And these took from the presses rich apparel, and what lay therein in wrapping-cloths; they took also brooches, and their silken girdles worked with gold, and attired themselves in haste. Many a noble maiden adorned herself with care, and the youths longed exceedingly to find favour in their eyes, and had not taken a rich king's land in lieu thereof. And they that knew not one another before looked each upon each right gladly.

The rich king commanded an hundred men of his household, his kinsmen and hers, to escort his sister, their swords in their hand. Uta, with an hundred and more of her women, gorgeously attired, came forth from the female apartments, and many noble damsels followed after her daughter. The knights pressed in upon them, thinking thereby to behold the beautiful maiden.

And lo! the fair one appeared, like the dawn from out the dark clouds. And he that had borne her so long

FIFTH ADVENTURE

HOW SIEGFRIED FIRST SAW KRIEMHILD

A VAST multitude of them that would attend the hightide drew daily to the Rhine ; and unto those that came for love of the king horses were given and goodly raiment, and to each his place, even unto two and thirty princes of the highest and the best. So they tell us.

And the women vied with one another in their attire. Giseler, the youth, and Gernot, and their two squires, rested not from welcoming both friends and strangers. They gave courtly greeting unto the warriors.

The guests brought with them to the Rhine, to the tourney, saddles worked in ruddy gold, and finely-wrought shields, and knightly apparel. And the sick rejoiced, and they that lay on their beds sore wounded forgot that death is an hard thing. When the rumour of the festival was noised abroad, no man took heed more of them that groaned, for each thought only how he might sojourn there as a guest. Joy without measure had all they that were found there, and gladness and rejoicing were in Gunther's land.

On Whitsun morning there drew toward the hightide a goodly company of brave men, fairly clad : five thousand or more, and they made merry far and wide, and strove with one another in friendly combat.

Now Gunther knew well how, truly and from his heart, the hero of the Netherland loved his sister whom he had not yet seen, and whose beauty the people praised before that of all other maidens.

And he said, "Now counsel me, my kinsmen and my lieges, how we may order this hightide, that none may blame us in aught ; for only unto such deeds as are good, pertaineth lasting fame."

Then answered Ortwin, the knight, to the king, "If thou wilt win for thyself glory from the hightide, let now

the maidens that dwell with honour in our midst appear before us. For what shall pleasure or glad a man more than to behold beautiful damsels and fair women? Bid thy sister come forth and shew herself to thy guests."

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And lo! the fair one appeared, like the dawn from out the dark clouds. And he that had borne her so long in his heart was no more aweary, for the beloved one, his sweet lady, stood before him in her beauty. Bright jewels sparkled on her garments, and bright was the rose red of her hue, and all they that saw her proclaimed her peerless among maidens.

As the moon excelleth in light the stars shining clear from the clouds, so stood she, fair before the other women, and the hearts of the warriors were uplifted. The charnelains made way for her through them that pressed in to behold her. And Sægfred joyed, and sorrow'd like-wise, for he said in his heart, "How should I woo such a one? Surely it was a vain dream. yet I were liefer than a stranger to thee."

So thus he waxed oft white and red, yea, graceful

high greeting many good men lie low, slain by the hand of Siegfried, the which hath been proven to my cost. God grant he return not to Denmark!"

Then they ordered to make way for fair Kriemhild. Valiant knights in stately array escorted her to the minster, where she was parted from Siegfried. She went thither followed by her maidens; and so rich was her apparel that the other women, for all their striving, were as naught beside her, for to glad the eyes of heroes she was born.

Scarce could Siegfried tarry till they had sung mass, he yearned so to thank her for his gladness, and that she whom he bore in his heart had inclined her desire toward him, even as his was to her, which was meet.

Now when Kriemhild was come forth to the front of the minster, they bade the warrior go to her again, and the damsel began to thank him, that before all others he had done valiantly. And she said, "Now, God requite thee, Sir Siegfried, for they tell me thou hast won praise and honour from all knights."

He looked on the maid right sweetly, and he said, "I will not cease to serve them. Never, while I live, will I lay head on pillow, till I have brought their desire to pass. For love of thee, dear lady, I will do this."

And every day of twelve, in the sight of all the people, the youth walked by the side of the maiden as she went to the court. So they showed their love to the knight.

And there was merriment and gladness and delight in the hall of Gunther, without and within, among the valiant men. Ortwin and Hagen did many wonderful deeds, and if any devised a sport, warriors, joyous in strife, welcomed it straightway. So were the knights proven before the guests, and they of Gunther's land won glory. The wounded also came forth to take part with their comrades, to skirmish with the buckler, and to shoot the shaft, and waxed strong thereby, and increased their might.

Gunther gave order that, for the term of the high tide, they should set before them meats of the daintiest, that he might fail in naught as a king, nor the people blame him.

And he came to his guests, and said, "Receive my

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gifts ere ye go hence, and refuse not the treasure that I would share with you."

The Danes made answer, "Ere we turn again to our land, make thou a lasting peace with us. We have need of such, that have many dear friends dead, slain by thy warriors."

Ludgast and eke the Saxon were healed of their wounds gotten in battle, but many tarried behind, dead.

Then Gunther sought Siegfried and said, "Now counsel me in this. On the morrow our guests ride forth, and they desire of me and mine a lasting covenant. What they offer I will tell thee: as much gold as five hundred horses may carry, they will give me to go free."

And Siegfried answered, "That were ill done. Send them forth without ransom, that they ride no more hither as foemen. And they shall give thee the hand thereon for surety."

"What thou counsellest I will do. They shall depart as thou sayest."

And they told it to his enemies; also that none desired their gold. They said it to the war-tired men, by reason of whom the dear ones of their own land sorrowed.

And the king took shields full of treasure, and divided it among them without weighing it, five hundred marks and more. Gernot, the brave knight, counselled him thereto. And they took their leave, for they were aweary for home. And they passed before Kriemhild and Queen Uta; never were knights dismissed more courteously.

The chambers were void when they left, nevertheless the king abode there still with his lieges and his vassals and knights. And these ceased not to go before Kriemhild.

Then Siegfried, the hero, had also taken leave, for he thought not to attain his desire. But the king heard of it, and Giseler the youth turned him back. "Whither ridest thou, Sir Siegfried? Prithce yield to me in this. Go not from among our knights, and Gunther, and his men. Here are fair maidens enow that thou mayest behold at will."

So bold Sir Siegfried, "Let stand the horses, bear

hence the shields. I would have ridden forth and turned again to my land, but Giselher hath changed my intent."

So he abode among them through love, nor in any land had it been sweeter for him. And Kriemhild, the fair maiden, he saw daily, by reason of whose beauty he tarried.

They passed the time in sports and feats of chivalry. But his heart was weary with love; yea, for love he sorrowed then, and, after, died miserably.

SIXTH ADVENTURE

HOW GUNTHER WENT TO ISSLAND TO WOO BRUNHILD

A FRESH rumour spread beyond the Rhine. It was reported that many maidens dwelt there; and Gunther was minded to woo one of them, whereat his knights and his liegemen were well pleased.

There was a queen high throned across the sea, that had not her like, beyond measure fair and of mickle strength, and her love was for that knight only that could pass her at the spear. She hurled the stone and leapt after it to the mark. Any that desired the noble damsel's love must first win boldly in these three games. If he failed but in one, he lost his head.

And oft had this happed already, when the rumour thereof reached the noble warrior by the Rhine, who fixed his desire upon the maiden, the which, or all was done, cost the life of many heroes.

On a day that the king sat with his men, and they cast to and fro whom their prince might best take to wife for his own comfort and the good of his land, the lord of Rhineland said, "I will hence across the sea to Brunhild, let what will betide. For her sake I will peril my body, for I lose it if I win her not to wife."

"Do not so," said Siegfried. "Cruel is the queen, and he that would woo her playeth too high a stake. Make not this journey."

But King Gunther answered, "Never yet was woman born so stark and bold, that, with this single hand, I could not vanquish her in strife."

But Siegfried said, "Peace! Thou knowest her not. Wert thou four men, thou wert no match for her grim wrath. In good faith I counsel thee to let the matter be. If thou lovest thy life, come not in such straits for her sake."

"Nay, now, I care not how stark she be; I will

journey, even as I have said, to Brunhild, and take my chance. For her great beauty I must adventure this. What if God prosper me, and she follow me to the Rhine?"

"Then I counsel thee," said Hagen, "to ask Siegfried to share with thee this hard emprise. It were well, since he knoweth so much of Brunhild."

So the king spake, "Wilt thou help me, most noble Siegfried, to woo the damsel? Grant me this, and if I win the royal maiden for my dear one, I will adventure honour and life for thy sake."

Siegfried, the son of Siegmund, made answer, "Give me thy sister Kriemhild, the high princess, and I will do it. Other meed I ask not."

Said Gunther, "I swear it, Siegfried, on thy hand. If Brunhild come hither, I will give thee my sister to wife; and mayest thou live joyfully with her to thy life's end."

The noble warriors swore an oath; and travail enow they endured, or they led back the fair one to the Rhine; yea, oftentimes they were straightened sore.

I have heard tell of wild dwarfs: how that they dwell in hollow mountains, and wear wonderful cloaks called *Tarnkappes*. And whoso hath this on his body cometh not in scathe by blows or spear-thrusts; nor is he seen of any man so long as he weareth it, but may spy and hearken at his will. His strength also waxeth thereby; so runneth the tale.

Siegfried took the *Tarnkappe* with him that he had wrested from Albrie the dwarf. And these high and noble knights made ready for the journey. When stark Siegfried did on the *Tarnkappe*, he was strong with the strength of twelve men, and with these cunning devices he won the royal maiden; for the cloak of cloud was fashioned on such wise, that whoso wore it did what him listed, none seeing; and he won Brunhild thereby, that after brought him dole.

"Now tell me, Siegfried, or we depart, how we may cross the sea with honour? Shall we take warriors with us to Brunhild's land? It were easy to summon thirty thousand knights."

SEVENTH ADVENTURE

HOW GUNTHER WON BRUNHILD

MEANWHILE the ship was come nigh to the castle, and the king saw many fair maidens that stood above at the windows. It irked him that he knew them not, and he said to Siegfried, his friend, "Knowest thou aught of these maidens that look down at us on the sea? Howso their lord night, they are, certes, right noble."

Bold Siegfried answered, "Spy secretly among them, and say which thou wouldst have chosen, if thou hadst had the choice." And Gunther said, "I will. I see one standing at yonder window in snow-white robe. Goodly is she, and for her fair body's sake, mine eyes choose her. If I had the power, she should be my wife."

"Thine eyes have led thee aright. That is the noble Brunhild, the beautiful lady that thou desirest with thy heart and thy soul." Gunther found no fault in her.

The queen bade her damsels void the windows, nor stand in the gaze of strangers. They obeyed; but what they did after hath been told us. They adorned them for the warriors, as is the manner of fair women: then they stole to the loopholes and looked curiously at the heroes.

These came only four strong into the land. Bold Siegfried held a horse on the strand, and, by reason thereof, the women that spied through the windows deemed King Gunther of the more worship. He held the good horse by the bridle: stately it was and sleek, mickle and stark, and King Gunther sat in the saddle, and Siegfried served him; but Gunther forgot this afterward.

Then Siegfried took his own horse from the ship. Seldom before had he held the stirrup for a warrior to mount. And all this the fair women marked through the loopholes. The heroes were clad alike; both their horses and their apparel were snow-white, and the

shields were goodly that shone in their hands. Their saddles were set with precious stones, their poytrals small, and hung with bells of burnished gold. So they rode proudly into Brunhild's courtyard, and came into the land as befitted their might, with new-sharpened spears, and finely-tempered swords, keen and massy, that reached to their spurs. All this Brunhild, the royal maiden, saw.

Dankwart rode with them, and Hagen. These knights, they say, wore clothes of raven-black, and their shields were mickle, broad and goodly. Stones from India shone on their apparel. They left the vessel unguarded on the beach, and rode up to the castle. There they saw eighty and six towers, three great palaces, and a stately hall of costly marble, green like grass, wherein the queen sat with her courtiers.

Brunhild's men unlocked the castle gate and threw it wide, and ran toward them, and welcomed the guests to their queen's land. They bade hold the horses, and take the shields from their hands. And the chamberlain said, "Do off your swords now, and your bright armour." "Not so," answered Hagen of Trony; "we will bear these ourselves."

But Siegfried told them the custom of the court. "It is the law here that no guest shall bear arms. Wherefore ye did well to give them up."

Gunther's man obeyed, much loth. They bade pour out the wine for the guests, and see that they were well lodged. Willing knights in princely attire ran to and fro to serve them, spying with many glances at the strangers.

They brought word to Brunhild that unknown warriors in rich apparel were come thither, sailing on the sea, and the beautiful maiden questioned them. "Tell me," said the queen, "who these strangers be that stand yonder so proudly, and for whose sake they be come." And one of the courtiers made answer. "In sooth, Lady, albeit I never yet set eyes on them, one among them much resembleth Siegfried, and him I counsel thee to welcome. The second of the company

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hath so lofty a mien that, if his power be equal thereto, he might well be a great king and a ruler of wide lands, for he standeth right proudly before the others. The third, O Queen, is grim, yet a goodly man withal. His glance is swift and dark; he is fierce-tempered, I ween. The youngest pleaseth me well. Maidenly and modest he standeth, yet it went hard, methinketh, with any that angered him. For all that he seemeth gentle, and is fashioned daintily, if his wrath were once kindled, many a woman might weep, for he is a bold and virtuous knight, and right worshipful."

The queen said, "Bring me my robe. If stark Siegfried be come into my land to woo me, he shall pay for it with his life. I fear him not so greatly that I should yield me to be his wife."

Then Brunhild attired her in haste. An hundred or more of her damsels went with her, richly adorned, whom the guests beheld gladly. Brunhild's knights of Issland gave them escort, to the number of five hundred or thereabout, their swords in their hands, the which irked the bold strangers. They stood up from their seats; and the queen spake courteously to them when she saw Siegfried, "Thou art welcome, Siegfried, to this land. To what end art thou come? I prithee tell me."

"I thank thee, O Brunhild, fair daughter of a king, that thou greetest me before this worshipful knight. Thou showest Siegfried too much honour, for he is my lord, and the king of Rhineland. What boots it to say more? For thy sake we are come hither, for he would woo thee at all hazards. Weigh the matter betimes, for of a surety he will win thee. His name is Gunther; he is a great and mighty king, and he desireth naught save thy love. To this end I have followed him, nor had done it, but that he is my master."

She answered, "If he be thy lord, and thou be his man, let him withstand me at the games. If he have the mastery, then am I his wife, but let him fail in one of them, and ye be all dead men."

Then said Hagen of Trony, "Lady, show us the games that thou proposest. It will go hard with Gunther or he

Said Hagen of Burgundy, "While we were downcast by reason of thee, O Queen, and afterward, when the king of Rhineland had beaten thee at the sports, Siegfried was at the ship, and knoweth naught of what hath passed."

"Right glad am I," said Siegfried, "that thy wooing hath prospered, and that none is thy master. Now must thou follow us, noble Lady, to the Rhine."

But Brunhild answered, "Not yet; I must first summon my friends and my liegemen. Not so lightly can I quit my land. Certes, I will send for my kinsfolk afore I go."

She despatched envoys over all, and bade her friends and her lieges haste to Isenstein. She gave to each princely apparel.

All day long, late and early, troops of knights rode into Brunhild's castle, till Hagen said, "Alack! What have we done? Some hurt will befall us from Brunhild's men. We know not her real intent. What if she spurn us when her forces are gathered together? Then were we all dead men, and this maiden were born to our woe!"

But stark Siegfried said, "I will see to that, and hinder what thou fearest. I will bring to your help a body of chosen knights that thou knowest not yet. Ask me no further, for I will hence, and God guard you meanwhile. I will return shortly, and bring with me a thousand knights, than whom the world holdeth none better."

"Only tarry not too long," said the king, "for we are right glad of thy help."

He answered, "I will come again in a few days. Tell the queen I left by thy command."

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Brunhild sprang to her feet again, and cried, "I thank thee, Gunther, for that blow." For she thought he had done it with his own strength, nor guessed that a far mightier man had felled her.

Then, greatly wroth, she hasted and lifted the stone on high; she flung it far from her, and leaped after it with loud-ringing armour. The stone landed twenty and four paces off; but the maid sprang further. Then Siegfried went swiftly where the stone lay. Gunther lifted it, but it was the man they saw not that threw it. Siegfried was mighty, bold and big. He hurled the stone further, and he leaped further; moreover, through his magic, he had strength enow to bear King Gunther with him. The spring was made, the stone lay on the ground, and none was seen there but Gunther, the knight. Fair Brunhild was red with anger.

So Siegfried saved Gunther from death.

Then Brunhild said aloud to her folk, when she saw the hero at the far end of the ring unhurt. "Come hither at once. my kinsmen and my lieges. Ye are subject henceforth to King Gunther."

The bold men laid the weapons from their hands at the feet of great Gunther of Burgundy. For they deemed he had won the game by his own strength.

He greeted them fair, for he was a courteous man, and he took the beautiful maiden by the hand. She gave him power in her kingdom. whereat bold Hagen rejoiced.

She bade the noble knight to the hall, where a multitude was assembled, that showed much observance through fear of his prowess. So, by Siegfried's might, they were delivered from all peril.

But Siegfried was wise, and stowed away his *Tarnkappe* with care; then he went back where the women sat, and said feigningly to Gunther, "Wherefore delayest thou to begin the sports that the queen proposed, let us now behold the issue thereof"—as if the cunning man knew naught of the matter.

The queen answered, "How cometh it to pass. Sir Siegfried, that thou sawest not the game whereat Gunther hath won?"

pressed for room, and the Burgundians were eager to be home.

Then said the queen, "I would thank him that would distribute for me, among mine and the king's guests, the gold and silver that I have in plenty."

Dankwart, bold Giselher's man, answered, "Noble Queen, give me the key, and I will so divide it that, if there be any shame, it shall be mine only."

None could deny that he gave freely. When Hagen's brother held the key, he bestowed costly gifts without stint. Whoso desired a mark received so much that the poorest was rich his life long. Pounds, by the hundred, he gave uncounted, and many an one went forth from the hall richly dight, that never afore had worn so fair vesture.

They told it to the queen, who was wroth, and said, "I would know, King, wherefore thy chamberlain leaveth me naught of my apparel, and spendeth all my gold. I would thank him that stayed his hand. He giveth as he thought I had summoned Death hither. But I trust to live yet a while, and can spend for myself, I trow, what my father left me."

Never had queen so lavish a chamberlain.

But Hagen of Trony made answer, "Know, Lady, that the King of the Rhine hath gold and raiment to give in plenty, nor needeth to bear aught of Bruchild's hence."

"Nay, if thou lovest me," said the queen, "let me fill twenty travelling chests with gold and with silk, that my hand may have somewhat to bestow when we get home to the land of Burgundy."

They filled the chests with precious stones. Her own chamberlain saw to it, for she would not trust Giselher's man. And Gunther and Hagen began to laugh.

Then the queen said, "To whom shall I leave my kingdom? Thy hand and mine must establish that or we depart."

The king answered, "Call forth whom thou wilt, and he shall be regent."

The lady saw her nearest of kin standing nigh her—her mother's brother—and to him she said, "Take my

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They lit many tapers, and poured for him the spiced draught. And he thanked them that they had not lingered, and said, "Ye shall follow me hence across the sea;" whereto he found the good knights willing.

Full thirty thousand warriors were come at his bidding, and from these he chose a thousand of the best. And some brought them their helmets, and some their coats of mail, for they had to follow Siegfried into Brunhild's land. He said then, "Hearken, good knights; ye go to court, and must have rich apparel, for ye shall be seen of fair women. Wherefore array you in your best."

Now a fool might say, "Thou liest. How could so many knights dwell together? Where find the meat, and where the vesture? It were not possible, if Siegfried had thirty lands." But ye have heard that Siegfried was rich, for the kingdom and the hoard of the Nibelungs were his. Wherefore his knights had enow and to spare, for the hoard grew never less for all that he took from it.

They rose up early in the morning (doughty followers had Siegfried won!), and took good horses with them, and sumptuous apparel, and departed proudly for Brunhild's land.

Many beautiful maidens gazed from the windows there, and the queen said, "Do any of you know who they be, that I behold yonder, afar off on the waves? Their sails are rich and whiter than the snow."

The King of Rhineland answered, "They are my men, that I left some little way behind when I journeyed hither. I summoned them, and now, Queen, they are here."

They welcomed the noble guests courteously. Siegfried stood in the prow of the vessel, richly clad, and many warriors beside him.

The queen said, "Tell me, O King, shall I greet the guests, or no?"

He answered, "Go out now before the castle. So shall they see that they are welcome." And the queen did as he counselled her, and greeted Siegfried before any. And they lodged them, and took their arms in charge.

Now so many guests were in the land that they were

pressed for room, and the Burgundians were eager to be home.

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NINTH ADVENTURE

HOW SIEGFRIED WAS SENT TO WORMS

WHEN they had journeyed full nine days, Hagen of Trony said, "Hearken to my word. We have delayed too long to send the news to Worms on the Rhine. The envoys should have been in Burgundy or now."

King Gunther answered, "Thou sayest sooth. And none were better for this business than thyself, friend Hagen. Ride now into my land, for thou art the fittest to tell of our coming."

"Nay, certes, dear master, I am but a bad envoy. Let me stay here at sea and act the chamberlain. I will look to the women's wardrobe, till we bring them to Burgundy. Bid Siegfried rather carry the message; by reason of his great strength he will bear it through well. If he deny thee, urge him with friendly words, that he do it for thy sister's sake."

So Gunther sent for the knight, who came when they had found him. And the king said, "We are well nigh home in my land. It is time I sent a messenger to tell my dear sister and my mother that we draw near. Undertake thou the journey, and I will owe thee much thank."

But Siegfried would not do it till that Gunther had begged him and said, "Ride not for my sake only, but for fair Kriemhild's, that the royal maiden requite it, even as I." And when Siegfried heard that, he yielded.

"Command what thou wilt, I will not gainsay it. I will do it for the sake of my beautiful lady. How should I deny aught to her that I bear in my heart? Because of her, I will perform all that thou askest."

"Tell Uta, then, the great queen, that we have prospered in our adventure; and let my brothers hear how that it hath fared well with us. Tell the same news to our friends. And hide nothing from my sister. Greet her from Brunhild and me; greet also the courtiers and

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castles and my land in charge, till that King Gunther's own hand holdeth rule here."

She chose from among her knights two thousand men to follow her to the Rhine, and the thousand Nibelung warriors. Then she made ready for the journey, and rode down to the shore. She took with her six and eighty women, and an hundred fair damsels, and they tarried not longer, but set out. They that were left behind wept sore! Graciously and sweetly the lady quitted her land. She kissed her nearest of kin that stood round. With loving farewells they reached the sea. To the land of her fathers the maiden returned nevermore.

Many hands made music during the voyage, and they had all manner of pastime, and a favouring wind. And so they sailed away; and many a mother's son wept for it.

Brunhild wedded not the king on the voyage, but waited for a hightide that was to be held in the castle of Worms; and thither they speeded merrily with their knights.

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all my men. Say to them that I have gotten the desire of my heart. And bid Ortwin, my dear nephew, raise seats by the Rhine. Make it known also to the other knights that I will hold a great hightide with Brunhild; and bid my sister, when she heareth I am at hand with my guests, prepare a fair welcome for my bride; for the which I shall ever be beholden to her."

So Siegfried took leave of Brunhild, as was meet, and rode to the Rhine. In the whole world was no better envoy.

With twenty and four knights he rode to Worms. And when it was noised abroad that he was come without the king, Gunther's servants were heavy of their cheer, for they feared that their lord had tarried behind, dead.

The messengers sprang gaily from their horses, and Giseler, the young king, ran to them, and Gernot, his brother, who cried quickly, when he saw not King Gunther with Siegfried, "Thou art welcome, Sir Siegfried. Tell me, now, what thou hast done with my brother the king. If the strength of Brunhild hath rest him from us, a bitter wooing hath it been."

"Fear naught. Thee and his kinsmen my friend greeteth by me, for he hath sent me hither to you with news. Contrive now that I come to the queen and thy sister. For I am charged with the same message to them as to thee, from Gunther and Brunhild: that it standeth well with the twain."

Giseler said, "Go in to them straightway, and it will please my sister. She feareth for my brother; by my troth, she will see thee gladly."

Siegfried answered, "If I can serve her in aught, it shall be done. Where are now the ladies, that I may go to them?"

Giseler, the brave youth, bare the message; he said to his mother and his sister, "Siegfried is come to us, the hero of the Netherland. My brother Gunther hath sent him hither to the Rhine. He bringeth us word how it standeth with the king. Allow him to come to the court, for he bringeth news from Issland."

The noble women were heavy of their cheer. They

ran for their robes, and arrayed them, and bade Siegfried to the court; and he went gladly, for he yearned to see them. Kriemhild, the noble maiden, greeted him fair.

"Thou art welcome, Sir Siegfried, valiant knight. Where is my brother Gunther, the noble king? I fear we have lost him by Brunhild's strength. Alack! that ever I was born!"

But the warrior answered, "Give me the guerdon of good news, for, fair women, ye weep without cause. I left him safe and sound—I say sooth—and he hath charged me with a message. He and his wife commend them lovingly to thee, O Queen. Dry thine eyes, for they will be here shortly."

Kriemhild had not heard such good news for many a day. She wiped her bright eyes with her snow-white apron, and began to thank the envoy for his message.

So ended her sorrow and her tears.

She bade Siegfried sit, whereto he was nothing loth, and said sweetly, "I would fain give thee the envoy's guerdon, wert thou not too rich to receive it. Take my good will in lieu thereof."

"Though I had thirty lands," answered Siegfried, "I were proud to take a gift from thy hand."

Kriemhild said, "Be it so." And she bade the chamberlain fetch the envoy's meed. She gave him four and twenty bracelets with precious stones for his fee. The hero would not keep them: he was too rich a prince, but gave them to the maidens that were in the chamber.

Uta, also, greeted him fair, and he said, "I must tell thee further what the king would have thee do when he cometh to the Rhine; for the which, if thou grant it, he will ever be beholden to thee. He would have thee receive his noble guests kindly, and ride out from Worms to the shore to meet them. He begged this of thee with true heart."

The beautiful maiden answered, "I will do it gladly. I will deny him no service. Faithfully and truly will I do it." And she grew red from love.

Never was prince's envoy better entreated. If she

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had durst kiss him, she had done it readily. On loving wise he took leave of the maiden.

Then did the Burgundians as Siegfried told them. Sindolt, and Hunolt, and Rumolt the knight, hasted and raised seats on the strand before Worms. The king's servants rested not. And Ottwin and Gary sent messengers out straightway to Gunther's liegemen over all, with news of the hightide. The maidens looked to their apparel. The palace and all the walls were decked out for the guests, and adorned cunningly for the stranger knights.

All the roads were thronged with the kinsmen of the three kings, that had been summoned to welcome Gunther and Brunhild. and many a rich vest was taken from its wrapping-cloth. Then the news spread, that Brunhild's friends had been spied on the way. And great was the press in Burgundy. Bold knights, enow, I ween, were there on both sides!

Fair Kriemhild said, "Go now, you of my maidens that will forth with me to the welcome, and seek out your best clothes from the chests, that we may have honour and praise from the guests."

The knights also bade bring out rich saddles, all of red gold, for the women to ride from Worms down to the Rhine. Better riding gear there could not be. Ha! how bright the gold shone on the horses, and the precious stones on the bridles! They brought out gilded side-saddles and goodly trappings for the women. And they were all merry of their cheer.

The horses stood ready in the court for the noble maidens, as I have told you, and the poultrals were of the finest silk that was ever spun. Eighty and six dames in head-coifs, fair, and dight in rich apparel, came to Kriemhild, and thereto, featly adorned, many a beautiful damsel; fifty and four, the fairest in Burgundy, with glittering lace over their yellow hair. All that the king had desired of them they did with good will. Fair robes of goodly stuffs that matched their white skins they wore before the stranger knights. None but a fool d found any of them amiss. Some had mantles of

TENTH ADVENTURE

HOW BRUNHILD WAS RECEIVED AT WORMS

ON the far bank of the Rhine appeared a mighty host—the king with his guests—and they drew nigh to the strand, where damsels, led by the bridle, stood ready with welcome. When they from Issland, and Siegfried's men of the Nibelung, saw that the ships were come, they hastened to the beach and laid hold, for they spied the king's friends that waited on the other side.

It is told of Uta, the rich queen, that she brought her damsels from the castle to ride with her, so that knights and maidens won knowledge of one another. The Margrave Gary held Kriemhild's bridle till they were out from the fortress; then Siegfried hastened to serve her, for the which he was after requited.

Ortwin the bold went by dame Uta's side, and, paired meetly and in sweet fellowship, knights and maidens rode together. Never, in sooth, at such meeting were so many women gathered. The men held tourney in the presence of Kriemhild and the rest, until the ships were landed, and did valiant deeds, that had been ill left undone at such a season.

Then they lifted the rich-attired women from their horses. Ha! what splintering of lances, what din of shields, what noise and clash of wrought bucklers, when the king and his guests were come over to the fair ones that stood by the haven!

Gunther, with his friends, went down from the ships; he led Brunhild by the hand; garments and precious stones shone bright and sparkled. And Kriemhild went eagerly toward them, and greeted Brunhild and her following. They drew back their head-bands with white fingers, and kissed one another through love. Then Kriemhild, the maid, spake courteously, "Thou art right welcome in this land, to me and to my mother, and to

our friends." And they courtsied and embraced. Never, I ween, was any greeted fairer than the bride, by Uta and her daughter, for they ceased not to kiss her sweet mouth.

When Brunhild's women were all gotten to land, the knights led them before the queen, where welcome was not stinted them, and where many a red mouth was kissed. The rich kings' daughters stood long side by side, and the warriors gazed on them. What these had heard tell they saw with their eyes, that none surpassed those two women in beauty, neither was any blemish found in them. They that esteem women for the comeliness of the body and what the eye beholdeth, extolled King Gunther's wife, but the wise that look deeper said, "Praised shall Kriemhild be before Brunhild." And the bright-attired women drew together where the silken canopies were spread, and the goodly tents, in the field before Worms.

The king's kinsmen pressed forward to see them. They prayed the two queens to go with their women where the shade was, and the Burgundian knights led them thither.

The guests also were now gotten to horse, and there was din of tilting against shields. The dust swirled up from the plain, as the land had been on fire, and the valour of many knights was proven, while the maidens beheld their prowess. Siegfried, I ween, rode many a course before the pavilions with his thousand Nibelungs.

Then came Hagen of Trony at the king's command, and, on friendly wise, stopped the jousting, lest the dust should irk the fair maidens, and they demurred not, but obeyed gladly.

Gernot said, "Let stand the horses till it groweth cooler, and let us lead the women home. But be ready to ride again when the king giveth the order."

So the tourney ended over all the plain. And the knights went to the women under the high pavilions, and passed the time merrily till it was time to ride home.

At the fall of night, when the sun went down and the air had begun to cool, they tarried not longer, but arose,

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men and women together, and the knights wooed the fair maidens with their eyes. Then, as was the custom of the land, the good squires spurred forward to the castle gate before the proud knights.

There the king alighted from his horse, and, on knightly wise, the heroes lifted down the women. There, too, the noble queens parted. Uta and her daughter went with their attendants into a wide chamber, and a merry din was heard over all.

The chairs were set, for the king was ready to go to table with his guests, and beautiful Brunhild stood by him, and wore her crown in Gunther's land. Certes, she was proud enough.

Many were the seats, they say, and the tables goodly and broad, and laden with food. Little, I trow, was lacking! And many a noble guest sat there with the king. Gunther's chamberlains carried round water in golden ewers. If any tell you of a prince's table better served, believe it not.

Or Gunther took the water, Siegfried, as was meet, minded him of his oath that he had sworn or ever he saw Brunhild in Issland.

He said, "Forget not the vow thou swarest with thy hand, that, if Brunhild came into Burgundy, thou wouldst give me thy sister. Where is thine oath now? Mickle toil was mine on the journey."

The king answered his guest, "Thou hast done well to remind me. I go not back from the oath of my hand. What I can do therein I will do."

They bade Kriemhild to the court before the king. She went up to the hall with her maidens, but Giseller sprang down the stair and cried, "Send back these maidens. My sister goeth alone to the king."

They brought Kriemhild before Gunther, where he stood amidst of knights from many lands. And they bade her stand in the middle of the hall. Brunhild, by this time, was come to the table, and knew naught of what was toward. Then said Dankrat's son to his kinsmen, "Help me now, that my sister take Siegfried to her husband."

And they answered with one accord, "That may she do with honour."

Gunther said, "Dear sister, I pray thee of thy goodness, loose me from mine oath. I promised thee to a knight : and truly thou wilt do my will, if thou take him to husband."

The maiden answered, "Dear brother mine, thou needest not to entreat. Command and I will obey. Him that thou givest me to husband I will gladly wed."

Siegfried grew red for love and joy, and vowed his service to Kriemhild. And they bade them stand together in a circle, and asked her if she would take the knight.

On maidenly wise she was shamefast at the first, yet so great was Siegfried's good fortune and his grace, that she refused not his hand ; and the king of the Netherland, from his side also, plighted his troth to Kriemhild.

When their word was given, Siegfried took his queen in his arms straightway, and kissed her before the warriors.

The circle brake up when this was ended, and Siegfried took the seat of honour with Kriemhild. The vassals served before them, and his Nibelung knights stood nigh.

The king and Brunhild were seated, and Brunhild saw Kriemhild sitting by Siegfried, the which irked her sore ; she fell to weeping, and the hot tears ran down her bright cheeks.

Whereupon the host said, "What aileth thee, sweet Lady, that the light of thine eyes is dim? Rejoice shouldst thou rather, for my land and rich castles and true liegemen are all subject to thee."

"I have cause to weep," said the maiden. "I grieve from my heart for thy sister, that she sitteth there by thy vassal. I must ever weep to see her so shamed."

But King Gunther answered, "I pray thee, silence! Another time I will tell thee why I gave my sister to Siegfried. May she live happily with the knight."

But she said, "I must grieve for her beauty and her birth. If I knew whither I might flee, I would not suffer

Meanwhile the guests rode at the tourney with fortune good and bad, but, when it was time for the women to go to the hall, they stopped the tilting and the din, and the chamberlains bade the folk void the way.

And now the courtyard was empty of horses and men. A bishop led each queen before the kings to table, and many proud knights followed them to their seats. The king sat beside his wife in good hope, for he minded Siegfried's promise. The one day seemed to him as thirty, for he thought only on Brunhild.

Scarcely could he wait till they rose from the table.

Fair Kriemhild and also Brunhild were led to their chambers. Ha! what bold knights went before the queen!

Joyful and without hate Siegfried the knight sat sweetly beside his beautiful wife. With her white hand she caressed his, till, she knew not how, he vanished from before her eyes. When she played with him and saw him no longer, she said to her maidens, "I marvel much where the king is gone. Who took his hands out of mine?" And so the matter dropped.

He had gone where he found the chamberlains with the lights, which he began to put out. By this sign Gunther perceived that it was Siegfried. He knew well what he wanted, and he sent away the women and maidens. When that was done, the king himself locked the door, and shot two strong bolts before it. He hid the light quickly behind the bed curtain, and the struggle that had to come began between stark Siegfried and the beautiful maiden. King Gunther was both glad and sorry.

Siegfried lay down by the queen, but she said, "Stop, Gunther, lest thou suffer as afore. Thou mayest again receive a hurt at my hand."

Siegfried concealed his voice and spake not. Gunther heard well all that passed, albeit he saw nothing. There was little ease for the twain. Siegfried feigned that he was Gunther, and put his arm round the valiant maiden. She threw him on to a bench, that his head rang loud against a foot stool.

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The bold man sprang up undaunted, but evil befell him. Such defence from a woman I ween the world will never see more. Because he would not let her be, Brunhild rose up.

"It is unseemly of thee," said the brave maiden. "Thou wilt tear my beautiful gown. Thou art churlish and must suffer for it. Thou shalt see!"

She caught the good knight in her arms, and would have bound him as she had done to the king, that she might have peace. Grimly she avenged her torn raiment.

What availed him then his strength and his prowess? She proved to him the mastery of her body, and carried him by force, since there was no other way, and squeezed him hard against a press that stood by the bed.

"Alack!" thought the knight. "if I lose my life by the hand of a woman, all wives evermore will make light of their husbands, that, without this, would not dare."

The king heard it well. He feared for the man. Then Siegfried was ashamed and waxed furious. He grappled fiercely with her, and, in terror of his life, strove to overcome Brunhild. When she squeezed him down, he got up again in spite of her, by dint of his anger and his mickle strength. He came in great scathe. In the chamber there was smiting with many blows. King Gunther, likewise, stood in peril. He danced to and fro quickly before them. So mightily they strove, it was a wonder they came off with their lives. The trouble of the king was twofold, yet most he feared Siegfried's death. For she had almost killed the knight. Had he dared, he had gone to his help.

The strife endured long atwixt them. Then Siegfried got hold of Brunhild. Albeit she fought valiantly, her defence was grown weak. It seemed long to the king, that stood there, till Siegfried had won. She squeezed his hands till, by her strength, the blood spurted out from his nails. Then he brake the strong will that she had shown at the first. The king heard it all, but he spake no word. Siegfried pressed her down till she cried aloud, for his might hurt her greatly. She clutched at her side, where she found her girdle, and sought to tie

his hands. But he gripped her till the joints of her body cracked. So the strife was ended.

She said, "Noble king, let me live. I will make good to thee what I have done, and strive no more; truly I have found thee to be my master."

Siegfried rose up then and left her, as though he would throw off his clothes. He drew from her hand a gold ring, without that she was ware of it. He took her girdle also, a good silken band. I know not if he did it from pride. He gave them to his wife, and suffered for it after.

The king and the fair maiden were left together, and, for that she was grown weak, she hid her anger, for it availed her nothing. So they abode there till the bright day.

Meanwhile Siegfried went back to his sweet love, that received him kindly. He turned the questions aside that she asked him, and hid from her for long what he had brought with him, till at the last, when they were gotten home to the Netherland, he gave her the jewel; the which brought him and many knights to their graves.

Much merrier was Gunther of his cheer the next morning than afore. Throughout his lands many a noble knight rejoiced, and the guests that he had bidden to the hightide were well feasted and served.

The hightide lasted fourteen days, during the which time the din of the sports, and of the pastimes they practised, ceased not. Mickle was the cost to the king. The king's kinsmen gave, in his honour, to the stranger knights, as their lord willed it, apparel, and ruddy gold and horses, and thereto silver enow; and they that received the gifts took their leave well content. Also Siegfried of the Netherland and his thousand knights gave all that they had brought with them—goodly horses with saddles. Certes, they lived right royally. Nevertheless, or they had made an end of giving, they deemed it long; for they were weary for their home. Never were guests better entreated. So ended the hightide, and the warriors went their ways.

ELEVENTH ADVENTURE

HOW SIEGFRIED BROUGHT HIS WIFE HOME

WHEN the guests were all gone, the son of Siegmund spake to his friends, "We will also forth to our land." And his wife was glad when she heard the news.

She said to her husband, "When shall we start? Yet be not in too great haste. My brothers shall first divide the land with me." But the word irked Siegfried.

The princes went to him and said, all the three, "Sir Siegfried, we be thy true servants till death. Know this of a surety." And he thanked the knights that they spake him so fair.

"We would also divide with thee," said Giselher the youth. "land and castles, and the rich kingdom that we rule. A full share thereof shalt thou receive with Kriemhild."

But the son of Siegmund made answer, when he had heard their honourable intent, "Blest be your heritage to you evermore, and also the people thereof. The share you would give to my dear wife she may well forego, for when she will wear the crown, she will be, if she live long enough, the richest woman on earth. Command me in aught else, and I will obey."

But Kriemhild said, "Though thou scorn my land, not so lightly shalt thou treat Burgundian warriors. These any king might be proud to take with him, and them, at the least, shall my brothers' hand share with me."

Gunter answered, "Take whom thou wilt. Thou wilt find many ready to ride with thee. Of three thousand knights, choose thou one thousand for thy following."

Then Kriemhild sent for Hagen of Tronay and for Ortwin, and asked them if they and their kinsmen would ride with her. But Hagen fell in a fury and cried, "To

no man in this world shall Gunther give us. Others can ride with thee. Thou knowest the men of Trony and their way. By the king at the court will we bide, to serve him and follow him as heretofore."

So she let the matter rest, and made ready for the journey; for her followers she won two and thirty maidens and five hundred men, among the which was Eckewart the Margrave. And they took their leave, as was meet. knights and squires, damsels and dames. They parted thence with kisses, and set out from Gunther's Land joyfully.

Her kinsmen brought her far on her way, and had night quarters put up where they desired them, in the king's land. And they despatched envoys to King Siegmund, to tell him and Queen Sieglind how that their son drew nigh with fair Kriemhild, Queen Uta's child, from Worms on the Rhine.

They could not have brought them better news.

Siegmund said, "Praised be God that I have lived to see the day when Kriemhild shall wear the crown here. My heritage is increased in worth, and Siegfried himself shall be king."

Queen Sieglind gave the envoys, for fee, red velvet and heavy silver and gold, for she was glad at the news.

Her women began to adorn them in haste, and when Sieglind knew who came with Siegfried, she let seats be builded, where he might be crowned in presence of his kinsmen.

King Siegmund's knights rode out to meet them. Never heroes were better welcomed, I trow, than these, into Siegmund's land. Sieglind rode forth, herself, to greet fair Kriemhild, with beautiful women and bold knights, a day's journey or they spied the guests. And strangers and friends were pressed alike for room, till that they came to a great castle that hight Xanten, where Siegfried and his wife were crowned afterward.

Siegmund and Sieglind kissed Kriemhild, and Siegfried also, many times with smiling mouth, for their sorrow was ended, and Kriemhild's attendants got a gracious welcome.

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They brought the guests into Siegmund's palace, and lifted the fair damsels from the horses. There were knights enow eager to serve them.

Howso rich had been the hightide by the Rhine, here the knights received costlier apparel than ever before in their lives. Many marvels might be told of their splendour. So they sat in honour and had plenty. The courtiers wore robes of red gold embroidered with precious stones and silk, that Sieglind, the noble queen, gave them.

Then Siegmund spake in presence of his kinsmen. "Be it known to you all that Siegfried shall henceforth wear my crown." They of the Netherland heard the news gladly. So he made over to Siegfried his crown and his rule and his land, that he became lord and king. And to him that he acquitted, and to him that he condemned, it was done according to his judgment. The husband of Kriemhild was a man greatly feared.

Thus, in high honour (and this is sooth that I say) he lived and reigned, a crowned king, till the tenth year, when a son was born, whereby the king's liegemen saw their desire accomplished. They hasted and christened him, and called him Gunther, after his uncle; that was no shame, for, took he after his kinsman, he must grow to be a bold man. They reared him well, as was meet.

And in these days Sieglind died, and many wept because death had taken her. Then Uta's child held supreme rule, as befitted so rich a queen.

Now at the same time, they tell us, in Gunther's land of Burgundy, the beautiful Brunhild had borne a son, that, for love of the hero, they named Siegfried. With all care they trained him. Gunther let him be reared by his liegemen at the court in all virtues that might serve him if he grew to be a man. Soon, alack, by an evil fate, he was to lose all his kind.

The fame of Siegmund's court ceased not to be noised abroad, and with what worship his knights abode there; great was the fame also of Gunther's chosen warriors in Burgundy.

The Nibelungs held their land in fee from Siegfried,

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where Siegfried sat by Kriemhild. Both were joyful to behold them. The king and his wife rose quickly to receive Gary and Gunther's knights of Burgundy. And they bade Gary sit down.

"Nay, let us way-weary guests stand while we tell thee Gunther's message. After, we will sit. Gunther and Brunhild, with whom it is well, and Queen Uta, your mother, and Giselher, the youth, and eke Gernot, and your nearest kinsmen, send greeting from Burgundy."

"Now God reward them," said Siegfried; "I hold them for good and true, as a man should trust his friends. The like doth their sister. Say on, whether they be of good cheer. Hath any done my wife's brethren a hurt since we parted? Tell me, for I will stand by them till their foemen rue my help."

Margrave Gary, the good knight, answered, "It is well with them, and they are of good cheer. They bid thee to a hightide, and were right glad if thou camest. They bid my Lady also. So soon as the winter shall be ended, before midsummer, they would see you."

But Siegfried said, "That can hardly be."

Whereupon Gary the Burgundian answered, "Your mother Uta, Gernot, and Giselher, pray that ye deny them not. Every day I hear them lament that ye dwell so far. Brunhild my mistress, and her maidens, rejoice in the hope to see you."

The message seemed good to Kriemhild. Gary was her kinsman; and the king bade him sit, and tarried not longer to let pour the wine for the guests.

Thither came Siegmund also, when he saw the messengers, and he spake to them on friendly wise. "Ye be welcome, ye knights, Gunther's men; since Siegfried won Kriemhild to wife, ye should have been seen here oftener, if you would have proved your love."

They answered that, if he willed it, they would come gladly, for that joy had taken from them their mickle weariness.

Then they bade the envoys sit, and set meats before them, whereof Siegfried gave order they should have

enough. Nine days they were kept at the court, till at last they murmured, saying that if they tarried longer, they durst not return again to their land.

Meanwhile Siegfried had let summon his friends. He asked them their mind about his journey. "Gunther my brother-in-law, and his kinsmen, have bidden me to a hightide at the Rhine, and Kriemhild also, that she ride with me. And I were fain to go if his country lay not so far off. Now counsel me, dear friends, for the best. Had I to harry thirty lands for their sake, my hand were at their service."

His knights made answer, "If thou wouldst ride to this hightide, we counsel thee on this wise: take with thee a thousand knights to the Rhine, that thou mayest have honour among the Burgundians."

Then said King Siegmund of the Netherland, "Wherefore hast thou not told me thou wouldest to the hightide? If thou hast naught against it, I will ride with thee, and will take an hundred knights with me to add to thy train."

"Wilt thou do so, dear father mine?" said bold Siegfried. "Right welcome art thou. Inside of twelve days we will forth."

To them that desired it horses and apparel were given.

Since the king was minded to make the journey, he sent away the swift envoys, and charged them with a message to his wife's brethren at the Rhine, that he would come right gladly to their hightide.

Siegfried and Kriemhild (so runneth the tale) gave so much to the envoys that their horses scarce sufficed to carry it, for Siegfried was a rich king. So, well content, they drave their sumpters before them.

Then Siegfried and Siegmund equipped their folk, and Eckewart, the Margrave, bade bring forth the best women's vesture that was in Siegfried's whole land. They made ready saddles and shields, and to the knights and the gentlewomen that were to ride with them, they gave freely, that they lacked naught. Siegfried led many valiant knights to his kinsmen.

The envoys hasted on their way, and when bold Gary

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came up with his men, and the heroes coursed to and fro on the plain, that none had ease for the dust and the press.

When the king saw Siegfried and Siegmund, on what loving wise he spake! "Ye are welcome to me and to all my men. Right joyful have ye made us by this journey."

"Now God reward thee," answered Siegmund, the worshipful man. "Since my son Siegfried won thee to his kinsman, my desire hath ever been to behold thee."

Whereupon Gunther said, "That it hath come to pass doth rejoice me."

Siegfried was received with the honour that was his due: and none wished him ill. From Gernot and Giselher, also, dear guests had never better welcome.

Then the two queens drew nigh to each other.

The saddles were emptied, and the women alighted on the grass with the help of the heroes, that were not slow, I trow, with their service!

The queens met, and the knights rejoiced at so fair a greeting, and ceased not to wait upon the fair women. Hero now to hero held out the hand of welcome: the women courtseyed and kissed, and Gunther's and Siegfried's men looked on well content.

They tarried not longer, but rode to the town, where the host bade it be shown plain that the guests were welcome to Burgundy. There, too, there was tilting before the maidens. Hagen of Trony and Orwin approved them mighty, for none durst gainsay their command: and they showed the dear guests much honour.

The clash of shields, and the din of piercing and smiting, rose before the castle gate. Long time stood the host there with his guest or they were all gone in, for in pastime the hours flew by. Then they rode merrily to the great reception hall. Gorgeous surcloths, rich and cunningly fashioned, hung down from the saddles of the beautiful women. Gunther's serving-men hastened forward, and led them to their chambers. All this time Brunhild kept not her eyes from Kriemhild, that was, certes, fairer, and of brighter hue than the gold she wore.

Over all the town of Worms was heard the mirth of the company. King Gunther bade Dankwart, his marshal, see to them well, who gave them goodly quarters. Without and within they feasted; never were strangers fairer entreated; all that they desired stood ready for them, for so rich was the king, that to none was aught denied. They were served well and without hate.

Then the king went to table with his guests. Siegfried they let sit where he had sat aforetime, and many a proud warrior strode after him to the feast. Twelve hundred knights were in the circle at the table; whereat Brunhild thought, "Never afore was vassal so rich." Nevertheless she was well minded to him, nor contrived aught to his hurt.

Many a rich cloak was wetted where the king sat that night, with the wine that the butlers ceased not to pour; for they toiled sore to serve all.

As hath still been the custom at hightides, the women and the damsels were led to their beds betimes, and to each guest, from whencesoever he came, the host gave honour and gifts enow.

When the night was ended, and the morning shone, precious stones sparkled on the rich apparel that the hands of the women drew forth from the travelling chests. Many a rich robe was sought out.

Or it was well day, knights and squires gathered before the hall, and the din of tourney arose again before the early mass that they sang for the king. Gunther thanked the young heroes. Then the trumpets were blown lustily, and the noise of drums and flutes was so loud that Worms, the wide town, rang therewith.

Everywhere the bold heroes sprang to horse, and tourney was held in the land. Many young hearts were there that beat high, and, under their shields, many a doughty knight. In the windows sat stately dames and beautiful maidens, featly adorned, and gazed down at the joisting of the warriors, till that the king himself began to tilt with his kinsmen. So they passed the time, nor thought it long.

Then the bells rang from the dome, whereat they led

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Whereat fair Kriemhild waxed very wroth. "Lose them thou must, then, for any service he will do thee. He is nobler even than Gunther, my noble brother. Wherefore, spare me thy foolish words. I wonder, since he is thy vassal, and thou art so much mightier than we, that for so long time he hath failed to pay tribute. Of a truth thine arrogancy irketh me."

"Thou vauntest thyself too high," cried the queen; "I would see now whether thy body be holden in like honour with mine."

Both the women were angry.

Kriemhild answered, "That shalt thou see straightway. Since thou hast called Siegfried thy vassal, the knights of both kings shall see this day whether I dare enter the minster before thee, the queen. For I would have thee know that I am noble and free, and that my husband is of more worship than thine. Nor will I be chidden by thee. To-day thou shalt see thy vassals go at court before the Burgundian knights, and me more honoured than any queen that ever wore a crown."

Fierce was the wrath of the women.

"If thou art no vassal," said Brunhild, "thou and thy women shall walk separate from my train when we go to the minster."

And Kriemhild answered, "Be it so."

"Now adorn ye, my maidens," said Siegfried's wife, "that I be not shamed. If ye have rich apparel, show it this day. She shall take back what her mouth hath spoken."

She needed not to bid twice; they sought out their richest vesture, and dames and damsels were soon arrayed.

Then the wife of the royal host went forth with her attendants. Fair to heart's desire were clad Kriemhild and the forty and three maidens that she had brought with her to the Rhine. Bright shone the stuffs, woven in Araby, whereof their robes were fashioned. And they came to the minster, where Siegfried's knights waited for them.

The folk marvelled much to see the queens apart, and

going not together as afore. Many a warrior was to rue it.

Gunther's wife stood before the minster, and the knights dallied in converse with the women, till that Kriemhild came up with her meiny. All that noble maidens had ever worn was but as a wind to what these had on. So rich was Kriemhild that thirty king's wives together had not been as gorgeous as she was. None could deny, though they had wished it, that the apparel Kriemhild's maidens wore that day was the richest they had ever seen. Kriemhild did this on purpose to anger Brunhild.

So they met before the minster. And Brunhild, with deadly spite, cried out to Kriemhild to stand still. "Before the queen shall no vassal go."

Out then spake Kriemhild, for she was wroth. "Better hadst thou held thy peace. Thou hast shamed thine own body. How should the leman of a vassal become a king's wife?"

"Whom namest thou leman?" cried the queen.

"Even thee," answered Kriemhild. "For it was Iegfried my husband, and not my brother, that won thee first. Where were thy senses? It was surely ill one to favour a vassal so. Reproaches from thee are much amiss."

"Verily," cried Brunhild, "Gunther shall hear of it."

"What is that to me? Thine arrogancy hath deserved thee. Thou hast called me thy vassal. Know now of a truth it hath irked me, and I am thine enemy henceforward."

Then Brunhild began to weep, and Kriemhild tarried no longer, but went with her attendants into the minster fore the king's wife. There was deadly hate, and bright eyes grew wet and dim.

Whether they prayed or sang, the service seemed too long to Brunhild, for her heart and her mind were troubled, the which many a bold and good man paid afterward.

Brunhild stopped before the minster with her women, she thought, "Kriemhild, the foul-mouthed woman,

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shall tell me further whereof she so loud accuseth me. If he hath boasted of this thing, he shall answer for it with his life."

Then Kriemhild with her knights came forth, and Brunhild began, "Stop! thou hast called me a wanton and shalt prove it, for know that thy words irk me sore."

Said Kriemhild, "Let me pass. With this gold that I have on my hand I can prove it. Siegfried brought it when he came from thee."

It was a heavy day for Brunhild. She said, "That gold so precious was stolen from me, and hath been hidden these many years. Now I know who hath taken it." Both the women were furious.

"I am no thief," cried Kriemhild. "Hadst thou prized thine honour thou hadst held thy peace, for, with this girdle round my waist, I can prove my word, and that Siegfried was verily thy leman." She wore a girdle of silk of Nineveh, goodly enow, and worked with precious stones.

When Brunhild saw it she started to weep. And soon Gunther knew it, and all his men, for the queen cried, "Bring hither the King of Rhineland; I would tell him how his sister hath mocked me, and sayeth openly that I be Siegfried's leman."

The king came with his warriors, and, when he saw that his dear one wept, he spake kindly, "What aileth thee, dear wife?"

She answered, "Shamed must I stand, for thy sister would part me from mine honour? I make my plaint to thee. She proclaimeth aloud that Siegfried hath had me to his leman."

Gunther answered, "Evilly hath she done."

"She weareth here a girdle that I have long lost, and my red gold. Woe is me that ever I was born! If thou clearest me not from this shame, I will never love thee more."

Said Gunther, "Bid him hither, that he confess whether he hath boasted of this, or no."

They summoned Siegfried, who, when he saw their anger and knew not the cause, spake quickly, "Why

weep these women? Tell me straight; and wherefore am I summoned?"

Wherein Gunther answered, "Right vered am I. Brunhild, my wife, telleth me here that thou hast boasted thou wert her leman. Kriemhild declareth this. Hast thou done it, O knight?"

Siegfried answered, "Not I. If she hath said so, I will rest not till she repent it. I swear with a hog's oath, in the presence of all thy knights, that I said not this thing."

The king of the Rhine made answer, "So be it. If thou swear the oath here, I will acquit thee of the falsehood." Then the Burgundians stood round in a ring, and Siegfried swore it with his hand, whereupon the great king said, "Verily, I hold thee guiltless, nor lay to thy charge the word my sister imputeth to thee."

Said Siegfried further, "If she rejoiceth to have troubled thy fair wife, I am grieved beyond measure." The knights glanced at each other.

"Women must be taught to bridle their tongues. Forbid proud speech to thy wife: I will do the like to mine. Such bitterness and pride are a shame."

Angry words have divided many women. Brunhild made such dole, that Gunther's men had pity on her. And Hagen of Trony went to her and asked what ailed her, for he found her weeping. She told him the tale, and he swore straightway that Kriemhild's husband should pay for it, or never would Hagen be glad again.

While they talked together, Ottwin and Gernou came up, and the warriors counselled Siegfried's death. But when Gunther, Uta's fair child, drew nigh and heard them, he spake out with true heart, "Alack, good knights, what would ye do? How hath Siegfried deserved such hate that he should lose his life? A woman is lightly angered."

"Shall we fear bastards?" cried Hagen. "That were small honour to good knights. I will avenge on him the boast that he hath made, or I will die."

But the king himself said, "Good, and not evil, hath

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he done to us. Let him live. Wherefore should I hate the knight? He hath ever been true to me."

But Ortwin of Metz said, "His great strength shall not avail him. Allow, O Lord, that I challenge him to his death." So, without cause, they banded against him. Yet none had urged it further, had not Hagen tempted Gunther every day, saying, that if Siegfried lived not, many kings' lands were subject to him.

Whereat the warrior began to grieve.

Meanwhile they let the matter lie, and returned to the tourney. Ha! what stark spears they brake before Kriemhild, atween the minster and the palace; but Gunther's men were wroth.

Then said the king, "Give over this deadly hate. For our weal and honour he was born. Thereto the man is so wonderly stark and grim, that, if he were ware of this, none durst stand against him."

"Not so," said Hagen. "Assure thee on that score. For I will contrive secretly that he pay for Brunhild's weeping. Hagen is his foe evermore."

But said Gunther, "How meanest thou?"

And Hagen answered, "On this wise. Men that none here knoweth shall ride as envoys into this land and declare war. Whereupon thou wilt say before thy guests that thou must to battle with thy liegemen. When thou hast done this, he will promise to help thee. Then he shall die, after I have learnt a certain thing from his wife."

Evilly the king followed Hagen, and they plotted black treason against the chosen knight, without any suspecting it. So, through the quarrel of two women, died many warriors.

FIFTEENTH ADVENTURE

HOW SIEGFRIED WAS BETRAYED

On the fourth morning, thirty and two men were seen riding to the court. They brought word to Gunther that war was declared against him. The women were woeful when they heard this lie.

The envoys won leave to go in to the king, and they said they were Ludger's men, that Siegfried's hand had overcome in battle and brought captive into Gunther's land.

The king greeted them, and bade them sit, but one of them said, "Let us stand, till that we have declared the message wherewith we are charged to thee. Know that thou hast to thy foeman many a mother's son. Ludger and Ludgast, whom thou hast aforetime evilly entreated, ride hither to make war against thee in this land."

The king fell in a rage, as if he had known naught thereof. Then they gave the false messengers good lodging. *How could Siegfried or any other guess their treason, whereby, or all was done, they themselves perished?*

The king went whispering up and down with his friends. Hagen of Trony gave him no peace. Many of the knights were fain to let it drop, but Hagen would not be turned from it.

On a day that Siegfried found them whispering, he asked them, "Whetefore are the king and his men so sorrowful? If any hath done aught to their hurt, I will stand by them to avenge it."

Gunther answered, "I grieve not without cause. Ludgast and Ludger ride hither to war against me in my land."

Then said the bold knight, "Siegfried's arm will withstand them on such wise, that ye shall all come off with honour. I will do to these warriors even as I did afore-

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time. Waste will be their lands and their castles, or I be done. I pledge my head thereto. Thou and thy men shall tarry here at home, and I will ride forth with my knights that I have with me. I serve thee gladly, and will prove it. Doubt not that thy folkmen shall suffer scathe at my hand."

"These be good words," answered the king, as he were truly glad, and craftily the Lie-man bowed low.

"Then said Siegfried further, "Have no fear."

The knights of Burgundy made ready for war, they and their squires, and dissembled before Siegfried and his men. Siegfried bade them of the Netherland lose no time, and they sought out their harness.

Then spake stark Siegfried, "Tarry here at home, Siegmund, my father. If God prosper us, we shall return or long to the Rhine. Meanwhile, be thou of good cheer here by the king."

They made as if to depart, and bound on the standard. Many of Gunther's knights knew nothing of how the matter stood, and a mighty host gathered round Siegfried. They bound their helmets and their coats of mail on to the horses and stood ready. Then went Hagen of Trony to Kriemhild, to take his leave of her, for they would away.

"Well for me," said Kriemhild, "that ever I won to husband a man that standeth so true by his friends, as doth Siegfried by my kinsmen. Right proud am I. Be-think thee now, Hagen, dear friend, how that in all things I am at thy service, and have ever willed thee well. Requite me through my husband, that I love, and avenge not on him what I did to Brunhild. Already it repenteth me sore. My body hath smarted for it, that ever I troubled her with my words. Siegfried, the good knight, hath seen to that."

Whereto Hagen answered, "Ye will shortly be at one again. But Kriemhild, pritheer tell me wherein I can serve thee with Siegfried, thy husband, and I will do it, for I love none better."

"I should fear naught for his life in battle, but that

he is foolhardy, and of too proud a courage. Save for that, he were safe enow."

Then said Hagen, "Lady, if thou fearest hurt for him in battle, tell me now by what device I may hinder it, and I will guard him afoot and on horse."

She answered, "Thou art my cousin, and I thine. To thy faith I commend my dear husband, that thou mayst watch and keep him."

Then she told him what she had better have left unsaid.

"My husband is stark and bold. When that he slew the dragon on the mountain, he bathed him in its blood; wherefore no weapon can pierce him. Nevertheless, when he rideth in battle, and spears fly from the hands of heroes, I tremble lest I lose him. Alack! for Siegfried's sake how oft have I been heavy of my cheer! And now, dear cousin, I will trust thee with the secret, and tell thee, that thou mayst prove thy faith, where my husband may be wounded. For that I know thee honourable, I do this. When the hot blood flowed from the wound of the dragon, and Siegfried bathed therein, there fell atween his shoulders the broad leaf of a lime tree. There one might stab him, and thence is my care and dolo."

Then answered Hagen of Trony, "Sew, with thine own hand, a small sign upon his outer garment, that I may know where to defend him when we stand in battle."

She did it to profit the knight, and worked his doom thereby. She said, "I will sew secretly, with fine silk, a little cross upon his garment, and there, O knight, shalt thou guard to me my husband when ye ride in the thick of the strife, and he withstandeth his foemen in the fierce onset."

"That will I do, dear lady," answered Hagen.

Kriemhild thought to serve Siegfried; so was the hero betrayed.

Then Hagen took his leave and went forth glad; and his king bade him say what he had learned.

"If thou wouldst turn from the journey, let us go hunting instead; for I have learned the secret, and have him in my hand. Wilt thou contrive this?"

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"That will I," said the king.

And the king's men rejoiced. Never more I ween, will knight do so foully as did Hagen, when he brake his faith with the queen.

The next morning Siegfried, with his thousand knights, rode merrily forth; for he thought to avenge his friends. And Hagen rode nigh him, and spied at his vesture. When he saw the mark, he sent forward two of his men secretly, to ride back to them with another message: that Luder bade tell the king his land might remain at peace.

Loth was Siegfried to turn his rein or he had done battle for his friends. Gunther's vassals scarce held him back. Then he rode to the king, that thanked him.

"Now, God reward thee, Siegfried, my kinsman, that thou didst grant my prayer so readily. Even so will I do by thee, and that justly. I hold thee truest of all my friends. Seeing we be quit of this war, let us ride a hunting to the Odenwald after the bear and the boar, as I have often done."

Hagen, the false man, had counselled this.

"Let it be told to my guests straightway that I will ride early. Whoso would hunt with me, let him be ready betimes. But if any would tarry behind for pastime with the women, he shall do it, and please me thereby."

Siegfried answered on courtly wise. "I will hunt with thee gladly, and will ride to the forest, if thou lend me a huntsman and some tracks."

"Will one suffice?" asked Gunther. "I will lend thee four that know the forest well and the tracks of the game, that thou come not home empty-handed."

Then Siegfried rode to his wife.

Meanwhile Hagen had told the king how he would trap the hero. Let all men evermore avoid such foul treason. When the false man had contrived his death, they told all the others. Gisela and Gernot went not hunting with the rest. I know not for what grudge they warned him not. But they paid dear for it.

SIXTEENTH ADVENTURE

HOW SIEGFRIED WAS SLAIN

GUNTHER and Hagen, the fierce warriors, went hunting with false intent in the forest, to chase the boar, the bear, and the wild bull, with their sharp spears. What fitter sport for brave men?

Siegfried rode with them in kingly pomp. They took with them good store of meats. By a cool stream he lost his life, as Brunhild, King Gunther's wife, had devised it.

But or he set out, and when the hunting-gear was laid ready on the sumpters that they were to take across the Rhine, he went to Kriemhild, that was right doleful of her cheer. He kissed his lady on the mouth. "God grant I may see thee safe and well again, and thou me. Bide here merry among thy kinsfolk, for I must forth."

Then she thought on the secret she had betrayed to Hagen, but durst not tell him. The queen wept sore that ever she was born, and made measureless dole.

She said, "Go not hunting. Last night I dreamed an evil dream: how that two wild boars chased thee over the heath; and the flowers were red with blood. Have pity on my tears, for I fear some treachery. There be haply some offended, that pursue us with deadly hate. Go not, dear lord; in good faith I counsel it."

But he answered, "Dear love, I go but for a few days. I know not any that beareth me hate. Thy kinsmen will me well, nor have I deserved otherwise at their hand."

"Nay, Siegfried, I fear some mischance. Last night I dreamed an evil dream: how that two mountains fell on thee, and I saw thee no more. If thou goest, thou wilt grieve me bitterly."

But he caught his dear one in his arms and kissed her close; then he took leave of her and rode off.

She never saw him alive again.

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They rode thence into a deep forest to seek sport. The king had many bold knights with him, and rich meats, that they had need of for the journey. Sumpters passed laden before them over the Rhine, carrying bread and wine, and flesh and fish, and meats of all sorts, as was fitting for a rich king.

The bold huntsmen encamped before the green wood where they were to hunt, on a broad meadow. Siegfried also was there, which was told to the king. And they set a watch round the camp.

Then said stark Siegfried, "Who will into the forest and lead us to the game?"

"If we part or we begin the chase in the wood," said Hagen. "we shall know which is the best sportsman. Let us divide the huntsmen and the hounds; then let each ride alone as him listeth, and he who hunteth the best shall be praised." So they started without more ado.

But Siegfried said, "One hound that hath been well trained for the chase will suffice for me. There will be sport enow!"

Then an old huntsman took a limehound, and brought the company where there was game in plenty. They hunted down all the beasts they started, as good sportsmen should.

Whatsoever the limehound started, the hero of the Netherland slew with his hand. His horse ran so swift that naught escaped him; he won greater praise than any in the chase. In all things he was right manly. The first that he smote to the death was a half-bred boar. Soon after, he encountered a grim lion, that the limehound started. This he shot with his bow and a sharp arrow: the lion made only three springs or he fell. Loud was the praise of his comrades. Then he killed, one after the other, a buffalo, an elk, four stark ure-oxen, and a grim sheik. His horse carried him so swiftly that nothing outran him. Deer and hind escaped him not.

The limehound tracked a wild boar next that began to flee. But Siegfried rode up and barred the path,

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sword hung down to the spur, and his hunting-horn was of ruddy gold. Of better hunting-gear I never heard tell. His coat was black samite, and his hat was goodly sable. His quiver was richly laced, and covered with a panther's hide for the sake of the sweet smell. He bare, also, a bow that none could draw but himself, unless with a windlass. His cloak was a lynx-skin, pied from head to foot, and embroidered over with gold on both sides. Also Balmung had he done on, whereof the edges were so sharp that it clave every helmet it touched. I ween the huntsman was merry of his cheer. Yet, to tell you the whole, I must say how his rich quiver was filled with good arrows, gilt on the shaft, and broad a hand's breadth or more. Swift and sure was the death of him that he smote therewith.

So the knight rode proudly from the forest, and Gunther's men saw him coming, and ran and held his horse.

When he had alighted, he loosed the band from the paws and from the mouth of the bear that he had bound to his saddle.

So soon as they saw the bear, the dogs began to bark. The animal tried to win back to the wood, and all the folk fell in great fear. Affrighted by the noise, it ran through the kitchen. Nimble started the scullions from their place by the fire. Pots were upset and the brands strewed over all. Alack! the good meats that tumbled into the ashes!

Then up sprang the princes and their men. The bear began to growl, and the king gave order to slip the hounds that were on leash. I' faith, it had been a merry day if it had ended so.

Hastily, with their bows and spears, the warriors, swift of foot, chased the bear, but there were so many dogs that none durst shoot among them, and the forest rang with the din. Then the bear fled before the dogs, and none could keep pace with him save Kriemhild's husband, that ran up to him and pierced him dead with his sword, and carried the carcase back with him to the fire. They that saw it said he was a mighty man.

Then they bade the sportsmen to the table, and they sat down, a goodly company enow, on a fair meadow. Hal what dishes, meet for heroes, were set before them. But the cup-bearers were tardy, that should have brought the wine. Save for that, knights were never better served. If there had not been false-hearted men among them, they had been without reproach. The doomed man had no suspicion that might have warned him, for his own heart was pure of all deceit. Many that his death profited not at all had to pay for it bitterly.

Then said Sir Siegfried, "I marvel, since they bring us so much from the kitchen, that they bring not the wine. If good hunters be entreated so, I will hunt no more. Certes, I have deserved better at your hands."

Whereto the king at the table answered falsely, "What lacketh to-day we will make good another time. The blame is Hagen's, that would have us perish of thirst."

Then said Hagen of Trony, "Dear master, methought we were to hunt to-day at Spessart, and I sent the wine thither. For the present we must go thirsty; another time I will take better care."

But Siegfried cried, "Small thank to him. Seven sumpters with meat and spiced wines should he have sent here at the least, or, if that might not be, we should have gone higher to the Rhine."

Hagen of Trony answered, "I know of a cool spring close at hand. Be not wroth with me, but take my counsel, and go thither." The which was done, to the hurt of many warriors. Siegfried was sore athirst and bade push back the table, that he might go to the spring at the foot of the mountain. Falsely had the knights contrived it. The wild beasts that Siegfried's hand had slain they let pile on a waggon and take home, and all they that saw it praised him.

Foully did Hagen break faith with Siegfried. He said, when they were starting for the broad lime tree, "I hear from all sides that none can keep pace with Kriemhild's husband when he runneth. Let us see now."

Bold Siegfried of the Netherland answered, "Thou

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mayst easily prove it, if thou wilt run with me to the brook for a wager. The praise shall be to him that winneth there first."

"Let us see then," said Hagen the knight.

And stark Siegfried answered, "If I lose, I will lay me at thy feet in the grass."

A glad man was King Gunther when he heard that!

Said Siegfried further, "Nay, I will undertake more. I will carry on me all that I wear—spear, shield, and hunting gear." Whereupon he girded on his sword and his quiver in haste. Then the others did off their clothes, till they stood in their white shirts, and they ran through the clover like two wild panthers; but bold Siegfried was seen there the first. Before all men he won the prize in everything. He loosed his sword straightway, and laid down his quiver. His good spear he leaned against the lime tree; then the noble guest stood and waited, for his courtesy was great. He laid down his shield by the stream. Albeit he was sore athirst, he drank not till that the king had finished, who gave him evil thanks.

The stream was cool, pure, and good. Gunther bent down to the water, and rose again when he had drunk. Siegfried had gladly done the like, but he suffered for his courtesy. Hagen carried his bow and his sword out of his reach, and sprang back and gripped the spear. Then he spied for the secret mark on his vesture; and while Siegfried drank from the stream, Hagen stabbed him where the cross was, that his heart's blood spurted out on the traitor's clothes. Never since hath knight done so wickedly. He left the spear sticking deep in his heart, and fled in grimmer haste than ever he had done from any man on this earth afore.

When stark Siegfried felt the deep wound, he sprang up maddened from the water, for the long boar spear stuck out from his heart. He thought to find bow or sword; if he had, Hagen had got his due. But the sore-wounded man saw no sword, and had nothing save his shield. He picked it up from the water's edge and ran at Hagen. King Gunther's man could not escape

him. For all that he was wounded to the death, he smote so mightily that the shield well-nigh brake, and the precious stones flew out. The noble guest had fain taken vengeance.

Hagen fell beneath his stroke. The meadow rang loud with the noise of the blow. If he had had his sword to hand, Hagen had been a dead man. But the anguish of his wound constrained him. His colour was wan; he could not stand upright; and the strength of his body failed him, for he bore death's mark on his white cheek. Fair women enow made dole for him.

Then Kriemhild's husband fell among the flowers. The blood flowed fast from his wound, and in his great anguish he began to upbraid them that had falsely contrived his death. "False cowards!" cried the dying knight. "What availeth all my service to you, since ye have slain me? I was true to you, and pay the price for it. Ye have done ill by your friends. Cursed by this deed are your sons yet unborn. Ye have avenged your spite on my body all too bitterly. For your crime ye shall be shunned by good knights."

All the warriors ran where he lay stabbed. To many among them it was a woeful day. They that were true mourned for him, the which the hero had well deserved of all men.

The King of Burgundy, also, wept for his death, but the dying man said, "He needeth not to weep for the evil, by whom the evil cometh. Better had he left it undone, for mickle is his blame."

Then said grim Hagen, "I know not what ye rue. All is ended for us—care and trouble. Few are they now that will withstand us. Glad am I that, through me, his might is fallen."

"Lightly mayst thou boast now," said Siegfried; "if I had known thy murderous hate, it had been an easy thing to guard my body from thee. My bitterest dole is for Kriemhild, my wife. God pity me that ever I had a son. For all men will reproach him that he hath murderers to his kinsmen. I would grieve for that, had I the time."

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He said to the king, "Never in this world was so foul a murder as thou hast done on me. In thy sore need I saved thy life and thine honour. Dear have I paid for that I did well by thee." With a groan the wounded man said further, "Yet if thou canst show truth to any on this earth, O King, show it to my dear wife, that I commend to thee. Let it advantage her to be thy sister. By all princely honour stand by her. Long must my father and my knights wait for my coming. Never hath woman won such woe through a dear one."

He writhed in his bitter anguish, and spake painfully, "Ye shall rue this foul deed in the days to come. Know this of a truth, that in slaying me ye have slain yourselves."

The flowers were all wet with blood. He strove with death, but not for long, for the weapon of death cut too deep. And the bold knight and good spake no more.

When the warriors saw that the hero was dead, they laid him on a shield of ruddy gold, and took counsel how they should conceal that Hagen had done it. Many of them said, "Evil hath befallen us. Ye shall all hide it, and hold to one tale—when Kriemhild's husband was riding alone in the forest, robbers slew him."

But Hagen of Trony said, "I will take him back to Burgundy. If she that hath troubled Brunhild know it, I care not. It concerneth me little if she weep."

Of that very brook where Siegfried was slain ye shall hear the truth from me. In the Odenwald is a village that hight Odenheim, and there the stream runneth still; beyond doubt it is the same.

SEVENTEENTH ADVENTURE

HOW SIEGFRIED WAS MOURNED AND BURIED

They tarried there that night, and then crossed the Rhine. Heroes never went to so woeful a hunt. For one thing that they slew, many women wept, and many a good knight's body paid for it. Of overweening pride ye shall hear now, and grim vengeance.

Hagen bade them bear dead Siegfried of the Nibelung land before the chamber where Kriemhild was, and charged them to lay him secretly outside the door, that she might find him there when she went forth to mass or it was day, the which she was wont to do.

The minster bell was rung as the custom was. Fair Kriemhild waked her maidens, and bade them bring her a light and her vesture.

Then a chamberlain came and found Siegfried. He saw him red with blood, and his garment all wet, but he knew not yet that he was his king. He carried the light into the room in his hand, and from him Kriemhild heard evil tidings.

When she would have gone with her women to the minster, the chamberlain said, "Lady, stop! A murdered knight lieth on the threshold."

"Woe is me!" cried Kriemhild. "What meanest thou by such news?"

Or she knew for certain that it was her husband, she began to think on Hagen's question, how he might guard him. From that moment her dole began; for, with his death, she took leave of all joy. She sank on the floor speechless; they saw the miserable woman lying there. Kriemhild's woe was great beyond measure, and after her swoon she cried out, that all the chamber rang.

Then said her attendants, "What if it be a stranger?"

But the blood burst from her mouth by reason of her heart's anguish, and she said, "Nay, it is Siegfried, my

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bold knights Gunther hath. If ye come to grips with them, ye must certainly perish."

They stood eager for strife with their shields dressed, but the queen begged and commanded them to forbear; that they would not, grieved her sore.

She said, "My lord Siegmund, let be, till more fitting season, and I will help thee to avenge my husband. Verily, I will show him that took him from me that he hath done it to his hurt. Here by the Rhine there are so many overweening men that I would have thee, for the present, forbear from battle; for thy one man they have at the least thirty. God do to them as they have done to us. Tarry here, brave knights, and mourn with me till it is day, and help me to lay my dear husband in his coffin."

The warriors answered, "Dear lady, be it so."

None might tell to the end the wailing that arose there from knights and women. It was so loud that they in the town heard it, and the noble burghers hastened thither, and mourned with the guests, for they were right sorrowful. They knew no fault in Siegfried for which he had lost his life, and the good burgesses' wives wept with the women of the court.

They bade the smiths go and make a coffin of silver and of gold, muckle and stark, and brace it strongly with good steel. Right heavy of their cheer were all the folk.

The night was ended. They told them it was day, and the queen gave order to bear the dead knight, her dear husband, to the minster; and all the friends he had there followed weeping.

When they came to the minster, how many a bell rang out! On all sides they sang requiems. Thither came King Gunther with his men, and also grim Hagen, that had better stayed away.

Gunther said, "Dear sister, woe is me for this grief of thine, and that this great misadventure hath befallen us. We must ever mourn Siegfried's death."

"Ye do wrongly," said the wailing queen. "If it grieved thee, it had never happened. I was clean forgotten by thee

when thou didst part me from my dear husband. Would to God thou hadst done it to me instead ! ”

But they held to their lie, and Kriemhild went on, “ Let him that is guiltless prove it. Let him go up to the bier before all the folk, and soon we shall know the truth.”

It is a great marvel, and oftentimes seen even now, how that, when the murderer standeth by the dead, the wounds bleed again. And so it fell then, and Hagen’s guilt was plain to all.

The wounds burst open and bled as they had done afore ; and they that had wept already wept now much more. King Gunther said, “ Hear the truth. He was slain by robbers. Hagen did it not.”

“ These robbers,” she answered, “ I know well. God grant that his kinsmen’s hands may avenge it. By you, Gunther and Hagen, was it done.” Siegfried’s knights had fain fallen on them, but Kriemhild said, “ Help me to bear my woe.”

Gernot her brother, and Giselher the youth, both came and found Siegfried dead ; they mourned for him truly, and their eyes were blind with tears. They wept for Kriemhild’s husband from their hearts.

It was time to sing mass, and men and women flocked from all quarters. Even they that missed him little mourned with the rest.

Gernot and Giselher said, “ Comfort thee, sister, for the dead, for so it must needs be now. We will make it good to thee while we live.” But comfort her could none.

His coffin was ready by the middle of the day, and they lifted the dead man from the bier whereon he lay, but the queen would not let them bury him yet. All his folk must first toil sore.

They wound him in a rich cloth. Not one, I ween, was there that wept not. Uta the noble queen and all her women wailed bitterly for Siegfried.

When the folk heard they sang the requiem, and that Siegfried was in his chest, they crowded thither, and brought offerings for his soul. Amidst of his enemies, he had good friends enow.

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They were all very sad to see the king
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With loud wail the people followed after. None was joyful, neither woman nor man. They sang and read or they buried him. Ah, what good priests were at his funeral!

Or Siegfried's wife came to the grave, her faithful body was wrung with such grief that they ceased not from sprinkling her with water. None could measure her sorrow.

It was a wonder that she lived. Her weeping women helped her. Then said the queen, "Ye men of Siegfried, as ye love me, do me this grace. Give me, in my sorrow, this little joy: to see his dear head once more." She begged this so long, and with such bitter weeping, that they brake open the rich chest.

Then they brought the queen where he was. She lifted his lovely head with her white hand, and kissed him. Her bright eyes, for grief, wept blood. It was a pitiful parting.

Then they carried her thence, for she could not walk. And she lay in a swoon, as her fair body would have perished for sorrow.

When the noble knight was buried, they that were come with him from the land of the Nibelungs made measureless dole. Little joy was seen in Siegmund. For three whole days some neither ate nor drank for woe. Longer than that their bodies endured it not. And so they ate and got well of their grief, as many a one doth still.

Kriemhild lay senseless in a swoon all that day and that night, till the next morning; she knew nothing that they said. And in like case lay also King Siegmund. Scarce got the knight his wits again, for his strength was weakened by reason of his great dole. It was no wonder.

Then his men said, "Sir knight, let us home. We may not tarry longer here."

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7. The applicant agrees that "I have not been arrested for any crime involving the use of a firearm or other dangerous weapon, nor have I been convicted of any crime involving the use of a firearm or other dangerous weapon, nor have I been convicted of any crime involving the use of a firearm or other dangerous weapon."

4. Collier the south side of the river to the state is born by the mother. There would be no reason to say there that have occurred and that they are the same for there that be at the same place."

He answered the inquiry, "I know it, I never
 did expect to be here, my friend."

"Now, I demand that your sister, to stay by my brother Charles, and I will make good to her the husband's debt."

But the Holbrookes answered, "No! we're both kind of old people."

While the youth brought her to London, Uta and Genot began to pray her, and her faithful kinmen also.

that she should tarry, for she had few kinsmen among Siegfried's men.

"They are all strangers to thee," said Gernot, "and however strong a friend may be, one day he must die. Consider it, dear sister, and take comfort, and stay here by thy kinsfolk. It were better for thee."

So she promised Giselher she would remain there.

The horses were led out for Siegmund's men, for they were ready to ride back to the land of the Nibelungs; and their harness was laid on the sumpters.

Then went Siegmund to Kriemhild, and said to her, "Siegfried's men wait by their horses. Let us away, for it irketh me here by the Burgundians."

Kriemhild answered, "They that are faithful among my kinsfolk counsel me to abide here with them. I have no kinsman in the Nibelung land."

Siegmund was woeful when he heard this from Kriemhild, and he said, "Let none tell thee that. Before all my kinsmen shalt thou wear the crown, and have dominion as aforetime; no man shall avenge on thee the loss of the hero. Come with us for thy little child's sake. Leave it not an orphan. When thy son is grown to a man he shall comfort thee; and meanwhile many a bold knight and good shall serve thee."

But she answered, "My lord Siegmund, I cannot go. Whatso come of it, I must tarry here with my kinsfolk, who will help me to mourn."

The warriors liked not the news, and they said with one accord, "Then might we bewail our wrong indeed, if thou shouldst abide here by our foemen. Heroes never rode to a sornier hightide."

"Depart without fear, and in God's keeping. I will see that ye come well escorted to your land. I commend my dear child to your care."

When they saw plain that she would not go, Siegmund's men all fell to weeping. How right piteously Siegmund parted from Kriemhild! His grief was bitter, and he said, "Woe is me for this hightide! Never yet hath such evil befallen a king and his men at a feast. They shall see us no more in Burgundy."

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many knights to her service that it must go hard with the others.

But King Gunther said, "It is her own. It concerneth me not how she useth it. Scarcely did I win her pardon. And now I ask not how she divideth her jewels and her red gold."

But Hagen said to the king, "A wise man would leave such a treasure to no woman. By reason of her largess, a day will come that the bold Burgundians may rue."

Then King Gunther said, "I swear an oath to her that I would do her no more hurt, nor will I do it. She is my sister."

But Hagen said, "Let me be the guilty one."

And so they brake their oath and took from the widow her rich hoard. Hagen got hold of all the keys.

Gernot was wroth when he heard thereof, and Giselher said, "Hagen hath greatly wronged Kriemhild. I should have withstood him. Were he not my kinsman, he should answer for it with his life."

Then Siegfried's wife began to weep anew.

And Gernot said, "Sooner than be troubled with this gold, let us sink it in the Rhine. Then it were no man's."

She went wailing to Giselher, and said, "Dear brother, forsake me not, but be my kind and good steward."

He answered her, "I will, when we win home again. For the present we ride on a journey."

The king and his kinsmen left the land. He took the best he had with him. Only Hagen tarried behind through the hate he bare Kriemhild, and that he might work her ill.

Or the great king came back, Hagen had seized all the treasure and sunk it in the Rhine at Lochheim. He thought to profit thereby, but did not.

Or Hagen hid the treasure, they had sworn a mighty oath that it should remain a secret so long as they lived. Neither could they take it themselves nor give it to another.

The princes returned, and with them many knights. Thereupon Kriemhild, with her women and her maidens,

began to bewail her wrong bitterly. She was right woeful. And the knights made as to slay Hagen, and said with one accord, "He hath done evilly." So he fled from before their anger till they took him in favour again. They let him live, but Kriemhild hated him with deadly hate.

Her heart was heavy with new grief for her husband's murder, and that they had stolen her treasure, and till her last day she ceased not to wail.

After Siegfried's death (I say sooth) she mourned till the thirteenth year, nor could she forget the hero. She was ever true to him, and for this folk have praised her.

Uta founded a rich abbey with her wealth after Dankrat's death, and endowed it with great revenue, the which it draweth still. It is the Abbey of Lorsch, renowned to this day. Kriemhild also gave no little part thereto, for Siegfried's soul, and for the souls of all the dead. She gave gold and precious stones with willing hand. Seldom have we known a truer wife.

After that Kriemhild forgave Gunther, and yet, through his fault, lost her great treasure, her heart's dolo was a thousand times worse than afore, and she was fain to be gone. A rich palace was built for Uta fast by the cloister of Lorsch. She left her children and went thither, and there she lieth still, buried in her coffin.

Then said the queen, "Dearest daughter mine, since thou canst not tarry here, dwell with me in my house at Lorsch, and cease from weeping."

But Kriemhild answered, "To whom then should I leave my husband?"

"Leave him here," said Uta.

"God in Heaven forbid!" said the good wife. "That could I never do, dearest mother; he must go with me."

The sorrowful one had his body taken up, and his noble bones were buried again at Lorsch beside the minster with great honour; and there the bold hero lieth in a long coffin.

But when Kriemhild would have journeyed thither with her mother, the which she was fain to do, she was forced to tarry, by reason of news that came from far beyond the Rhine.

BOOK II

TWENTIETH ADVENTURE

HOW KING ETZEL SENT TO BURGUNDY FOR KRIEMHILD

It was in the days when Queen Helca died, and King Etzel wooed other women, that his friends commended to him a proud widow in the land of Burgundy, that hight Queen Kriemhild.

Seeing fair Helca was dead, they said, "If thou wouldst win a noble wife, the highest and the best that ever a king won, take this woman. Stark Siegfried was her husband."

The great king answered, "How could that be, since I am a heathen, and have not received baptism? The woman is a Christian—she will not consent. It were a wonder, truly, if it came to pass."

But the good knights said, "What if she do it gladly, for thy high name's sake, and thy great possessions? One can ask her at the least; she were a fitting and comely mate for thee."

Then the noble king answered, "Which among ye knoweth the folk by the Rhine, and their land?"

Said good Rudeger of Bechlaren, "From a child I have known the high and noble kings, Gunther and Gernot, good knights both. The third hight Giselher; each of these doeth whatso goeth best with honour and virtue. The like did their fathers."

But Etzel said, "Friend, tell me now, is she meet to wear the crown in my land? If her body be so fair as they say, my best friends shall never rue it."

"She resembleth great Helca, my mistress, for beauty. No king's wife in the world could be fairer. Whom she taketh to friend may well be comforted!"

He said, "Then woo her, Rudeger, in my name and

for my sake. And come I ever to wed Kriemhild, I will reward thee as I best can. Thereto, thou wilt have done my will faithfully. From my store I will bid them give thee what thou requirest of horses and apparel, that thou and thy fellows may live merrily. They shall give thee therefrom without stint for thine embassy."

Rudeger, the rich Margrave, answered, "I were much to blame if I took from thy store. I will gladly ride, an envoy to the Rhine, at mine own cost, and with what I have received from thy hand."

Then the rich king said, "When thinkest thou to set out for the fair one? God guard thine honour by the way, and also my wife, if kind fortune help us to her favour."

Said Rudeger, "Or we quit this land, we must let fashion weapons and apparel, that we may win worship when we come before the princes. I will lead to the Rhine five hundred valiant men, that when they see me and mine at Burgundy, they may say that never king sent so many men so far as thou hast sent us, to the Rhine. And know, great king, if thou art set on this, that she belonged to Siegfried, a right goodly man, the son of Siegmund. Thou hast seen him here. Soothly, much worship might be said of him."

King Etzel answered, "If she was that knight's wife, the noble prince was of so high renown, that I may not scorn his queen. By reason of her great beauty she pleaseth me well."

Then the Margrave said, "I promise thee that we will ride hence in four and twenty days. I will send word to Götelind, my dear wife, that I, myself, go as envoy to Kriemhild." So Rudeger sent messengers to Bechlaren to his wife, the high-born Margravine, and told her that he would go wooing for the king.

The Margravine still thought lovingly on good Helca, and when she heard the message, she was one part sorry, and began to weep, lest she might not win such a mistress as afore. When she thought on Helca she was heavy of her cheer.

Rudeger rode out of Hungary in seven days, whereat

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King Etzel rejoiced. They made ready his equipment at the town of Vienna, and he delayed his journey no longer.

Gotelind awaited him at Bechlaren, and the young Margravine, Rudeger's daughter, saw her father and his men gladly. They got a fair greeting from beautiful women.

Or noble Rudeger rode to Bechlaren from the town of Vienna, the clothes, whereof there were enow, came on the sumpters. So strong they rode, that little was stolen from them by the way.

When they were come into the town of Bechlaren, the host bade lodge his comrades, and give them good quarters. Wealthy Gotelind rejoiced to see her husband, the like did also his dear daughter, the young Margravine, that was as merry as could be at his coming. Right gladly she saw the heroes from Hungary. The noble maiden said, with laughing mouth, "Ye be very welcome, my father and his men."

And the good knights were not slow to thank her.

Well Gotelind knew the mind of Rudeger. When she lay by him at night, she asked him sweetly whither the king of the Huns had sent him.

He answered, "I will tell thee gladly, my wife Gotelind. I go to woo a wife for my master, now that fair Helca is dead. I go to Kriemhild, on the Rhine, that shall become a great queen here among the Huns."

"God grant it fall so, for much good have we heard of her. Haply she will make up to us for our mistress of aforetime. We might well rejoice to have her wear the crown here."

Said the Margrave, "To them that ride with me to the Rhine, thou shalt give graciously of thy goods, dear wife. When heroes go richly attired, they be of high courage."

She answered, "There is none, if he will take it, but shall have what suiteth him well, or thou and thy men depart."

And the Margrave said, "Thou wilt please me well thereby."

Ha! what rich stuffs they took from their chambers! They hasted and provided the noble warriors with vesture

enow from neck to spur. What pleased him the best, Rudeger choose for himself.

On the seventh morning the host rode from Bechlaren with his knights. They took a goodly store of weapons and raiment through Bavaria, and were seldom fallen upon by robbers on the way.

Within twelve days they came to the Rhine. The news was not slow to spread. They told the king and his men that stranger guests had arrived. Then the king began to ask that, if any knew them, he might declare it. They perceived that their sumpters were heavy laden, and saw that they were rich; and they gave them lodging in the wide city straightway.

When the strangers arrived, the folk spied at them curiously. They wondered whence they had journeyed to the Rhine.

The king asked Hagen who the knights were, and the hero of Trony answered, "I have not seen them aright. When we meet them, I will tell thee whence they have ridden into this land. They be strangers indeed if I know them not straightway."

The guests had been to their lodging. The envoy and his train were richly arrayed. Their clothes were good, and cunningly fashioned; and they rode to the court.

Then said bold Hagen, "So far as I know, for it is long since I saw the knights, they ride like the men of Rudeger, a bold warrior from the land of the Huns."

"How could I believe," said the king, "that he of Bechlaren should come into this land?" King Gunther had scarcely made an end of speaking, when bold Hagen saw the good Rudeger.

He and all his friends ran to him. Five hundred knights sprang from their horses. The Huns were well received; never were envoys so richly clad.

Then cried Hagen of Trony, "Welcome, in God's name, is this knight, the prince of Bechlaren, and all his men." Worshipful greeting got the Huns. The nearest of kin to the king pressed forward, and Ortwin of Metz said to Rudeger, "We have not, for long, seen guests so gladly. I speak the truth."

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"Now God requite him," said Gunther, "that he commendeth his service so fair to me and to my men. I have hearkened gladly to his greeting. My kinsmen and my liegemen will repay him."

Then said Gernot of Burgundy, "The world may well rue beautiful Helca's death, for the sake of her many virtues."

Hagen and many another knight said the same.

But Rudeger, the noble envoy, went on: "If thou allow it, O king, I will tell thee further what my dear master hath charged me with. Dolefully hath he lived since Helca's death. And it hath been told him that Kriemhild is without a husband, for that Siegfried is dead. If that be so, and thou grant it, she shall wear the crown before Etzel's knights. This hath my lord bidden me say."

Then the great king spake courteously, "If she be willing, she followeth my desire therein. In three days I will let thee know. If she say not nay to Etzel, wherefore should I?"

Meanwhile they gave the guests good lodging. On such wise were they entreated that Rudeger was fain to confess he had friends among Gunther's men. Hagen served him gladly, the which Rudeger had done to Hagen aforetime.

So Rudeger tarried there till the third day. The king did prudently, and called a counsel, to ask his friends whether it seemed good to them that Kriemhild should take King Etzel to husband.

And they all counselled it save Hagen, that said to Gunther, the bold knight, "If thou be wise, thou wilt see to it that she do it not, even if she desire it."

"Why should I hinder it?" said Gunther. "If any good fall to the queen, I may well grant it. She is my sister. If it be to her honour, we ourselves should seek the alliance."

But Hagen answered, "Say not so. Didst thou know Etzel as I do, thou wouldst see that :
must suffer if she wedded him as thou .

"How so?" answered Gunther. "
I need not come so nigh him that I .

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They thanked the heroes for their welcome. Then they went with the warriors into the hall, where they found the king amidst of many bold men.

Gunther rose from his seat out of courtesy. On what friendly wise he went toward the envoys! He and Gernot hasted to meet the guests and his men, as beseemed them, and Gunther took Rudeger by the hand. He led him to the highseat where he sat himself, and bade his men set before the strangers goodly meats, and the best wine that was to be found in all the land round about the Rhine; the which was done gladly.

Giselher and Gary, Dankwart and Folker, came in, for they had heard of the worthy guests. They rejoiced to see them, and welcomed, in the presence of the king, the noble knights and good.

Then said Hagen of Trony to his master, "Thy knights are greatly beholden for what the Margrave hath done for our sake. The husband of fair Gotelind should be well requited."

King Gunther said, "I pray thee tell me, for I would know, how it standeth with Etzel and Helca in the land of the Huns."

The Margrave answered, "I will tell thee gladly."

Then he rose from his seat with all his men, and said to the king, "Give me leave to deliver the message that King Etzel hath sent me with, here to Burgundy."

Gunther answered, "I will hear the message where-with thou art charged, without taking counsel with my friends. Speak it before me and my men, for with all honour shall thy suit be heard."

Then said the faithful envoy, "My great lord commendeth his true service to thee at the Rhine, and to all the friends thou hast. This he doth with true heart. The noble king biddeth thee mourn for his loss. His people are joyless, for my mistress, great Helca, my lord's wife, is dead; whereby many high-born maidens, children of great princes, that she hath reared, are orphaned. For reason thereof the land is full of sorrow, for these, alack have none now to care for them. The king also ceaseth not to make dole."

and all my friends should mock my misery. What could I be to a man that hath known the heart's love of a good wife?"

She would none of it. But Gernot her brother, and Giselher the youth, came to her, and lovingly they bade her be comforted, for, if she took the king, it were truly to her profit.

But none could prevail on the lady to wed with any man. Then the knights prayed her, saying, "Receive the envoys, at the least, if thou wilt not yield."

"That I will do," said the queen; "I am fain to see Rudeger, by reason of his many virtues. Were it not he, but another envoy, I had remained a stranger to him." She said, "Send him hither to my chamber to-morrow early, and I will tell him my mind on this matter."

Then her bitter weeping began afresh.

Rudeger desired nothing better than to see the queen. He knew himself so skilful in speech that, could it be at all, he must prevail with her.

Early the next morning, when they were singing the mass, the noble envoys came. The press was great, and the valiant men that were bound for the court with Rudeger were richly arrayed.

Poor Kriemhild, the sad-hearted one, waited for Rudeger, the noble envoy. He found her in the clothes that she wore every day, albeit her attendants were in rich raiment enow. She went to the door to meet him, and received Etzel's man kindly. With twelve knights only he came before her. They were well entreated, for never were better envoys. They bade the warnor and his men sit down. The two Margraves, Eckewart and Gary stood before her, but all were sad of their countenance by reason of the sorrowful queen; many fair women sat round her, and Kriemhild did nothing but weep; that her robe on the bosom was wet with hot tears.

The Margrave saw this, and rose from his seat and spake courteously, "Most noble king's daughter, grant to me and my friends that are with me, to stand before thee and tell thee the message we bring hither."

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But Hagen said, "I will never approve it."

They summoned Gernot and Giselher, and asked whether it seemed good to them that Kriemhild should take the great king. And none save Hagen was against it.

Then said Giselher, the knight of Burgundy, "Do fairly by her for once, friend Hagen. Make good to her the hurt thou hast done her. Let her prosper without grudging it. Thou hast caused her much sorrow, and well might she hate thee. Never was woman bereft by any man of more joy."

"Trow me, I know that well. And were she to take Etzel, and to live long enow, she would do us all the hurt she could. She will have many valiant men to serve her."

But bold Gernot answered Hagen, "Belike we shall never come into Etzel's land till they be both dead. Let us do truly by her, and it will be to our honour."

Said Hagen, "None need tell me that. If Kriemhild wear Helca's crown, she will do us all the hurt she can. Let the thing alone; it were better for you knights."

Then Giselher, fair Uta's son, spake angrily, "We will not all do basely. If aught good befall her, we shall be glad. For all thou canst say, Hagen, I will serve her truly."

When Hagen heard that, he was wroth. Gernot and Giselher, the proud knights and good, and Gunther, the great king, agreed in the end, that they would allow it gladly, if Kriemhild were so minded.

Then Prince Gary said, "I will tell the lady, that she may incline her heart to King Etzel, for many a knight is his vassal. He may make good to her the wrong she hath suffered."

The good knight went to Kriemhild. She welcomed him kindly, and he said without ado, "Greet me gladly, and give me the envoy's meed, for good fortune parteth thee from all thy dole. One of the best men that ever ruled a king's land with honour, or wore a crown, hath sent hither to sue for thy love. Noble knights are come wooing for him; thy brother bade tell thee this."

But the sorrowful one said, "God forbid that thou

When they were all gone to their lodging, the lady sent for Giselher and her mother. To both she said that weeping beseemed her better than aught else.

But her brother Giselher said, "Sister, something telleth me, and I trow it, that King Etzel will end all thy dole. It seemeth good to me that thou take him to husband, whatso any other may counsel. He may give thee again all that thou hast lost. From the Rhone to the Rhine, from the Elbe to the sea, no king is so mighty as he is. Thou mayst well rejoice that he chooseth thee for his queen."

She answered, "Dear brother, wherefore counsel me thus? Mourning and weeping suit me better. How could I appear before the knights at court? Had my body ever beauty, it hath lost it."

Then said queen Uta to her dear daughter, "Dear child, do what thy brother saith. Be counselled by thy friends, and good will betide thee. Too long have I seen thee mourning bitterly."

Then she asked mighty God to guide her. Albeit she might have gold and silver and apparel to give, as aforetime, when her husband lived, never again could she have the happy hours.

She thought to herself, "Shall I give myself to a heathen? I am a Christian woman. I should be shamed before the world. Though he gave me the riches of the whole earth, it could never be."

At that point she left it; and all night long, till the day, the woman lay on her bed full of thoughts. Her bright eyes were never dry till she went to mass in the morning.

The kings also came at the hour of mass, and took their sister by the hand. They counselled her to wed the king of the Huns. But the lady was no merrier of her cheer.

Then they bade Etzel's men come before her, that were fain to be gone with her answer, whether it was a "yea" or a "nay." So Rodeger came to the court. His comrades urged him to learn the princes' mind without delay. This seemed good to them all, for it was a far way back to their land.

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They begged it so long that at the last the sorrowful woman promised, before the warriors, to become Etzel's wife.

She said, "Poor queen that I am, I will follow you! I will go to the Huns, if I find friends to lead me thither." Fair Kriemhild gave her hand on it before the knights.

Then said the Margrave, "Thou hast two knights for thy liegemen, and I have more. Thou canst fare across the Rhine with honour. I will not leave thee longer here among the Burgundians. I have five hundred men and also my kinsmen. These shall serve thee here, and at home likewise, and do thy bidding. I will do it also, and will never shame me when thou mindest me on my word. Bid them fetch thee forth thy horse gear, for thou wilt never rue Rudeger's counsel, and tell it to the maidens that thou takest with thee. Many a chosen knight will meet us on the road."

They had still the trappings that they rode with in Siegfried's time, so that she could take many maidens with her in fitting pomp when she departed. Ha! what goodly saddles they brought out for the fair women! All the rich clothes they had ever worn were made ready for the journey, for they had heard much of the king. They opened the chests that had stood shut, and hewed them for five days and a half, and took from the presses the store of things that lay therein. Kriemhild unlocked her chambers, that she might make Rudeger's men rich. She had still some gold from the Nibelung hoard, that she purposed to divide with her hand among the Huns. An hundred mules scarce carried it.

Hagen heard the news, and said, "Since Kriemhild will never forgive me, Siegfried's gold shall stay here. Wherefore should I let my soemen get so much wealth. Well I know what Kriemhild will do with this treasure. If she took it hence, she would divide it, certes, to my hurt. Tell her that Hagen will keep it."

When she heard this, her anger was grim. They told it to the three kings, that would gladly have put it right; when they could not, noble Rudeger said joyfully,

burghers of the town got word that Kriemhild, the child of their prince's sister, came thither, she was received with great worship by the merchants.

The bishop thought she would tarry there, but Celewarr said, "It cannot be, for we must down into Rudeger's land. Many knights await us that know of our coming."

Fair Gotelind also had heard the news. She and her high-born child made them ready in haste, for Rudeger had bidden her cheer the queen by riding to meet her with all his men, as far as the Rhine. This was no sooner done than the roads were thronged with folk riding and running afoot to meet the guests.

The queen was now come to Liffording. There many a Bavarian robber had gladly plundered them on the road, as their custom is, and had easily done them a hurt. But noble Rudeger had guarded against this, he had with him a thousand knights or more. Rudeger's wife, Gotelind, too, was come thither, and with her many bold warriors. When they had crossed the Traun at Rhine, they found booths and tents pitched for them on the plain where they were to sleep. Rudeger took all the charges on himself.

Gotelind set out from her quarters, and many horses with jingling bridles took the road. It was a fair welcome, and done for Rudeger's sake. The knights, from both sides, pricked gallantly to the greeting, and showed their horsemanship in the presence of the maidens, that saw it gladly enough. When Rudeger's men rode up to the strangers, many a splinter flew into the air from the hands of the heroes, that tilted on lightly wise. They rode to win praise from the women. When the journey was ended, the men greeted each other, and fair Gotelind was led to Kriemhild. There was little rest for any skilled to wait upon women.

The Margrave rode to meet his wife, that was not sorry to see him come back safe from the Rhine. In her joy she forgot her long dole. When she had welcomed him, he bade her alight on the grass with her attendants. The knights hastened to serve them.

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When Kriemhild saw the Margravine standing with her train, she went no further, but stayed her horse and bade them lift her quickly from the saddle. The bishop led his sister's child, he and Eckewart, to Gotelind, and all that stood in the way fell back. Then the stranger kissed the Margravine on the mouth, and Rudeger's wife said sweetly, "Well for me, dear lady, that I have seen with mine eyes thy fair body here in this land! Naught so welcome hath, for long, befallen me." "God reward thee, noble Gotelind," answered Kriemhild. "If I be spared alive to live with Botlung's child, it may indeed be well for thee that thou hast seen me." Neither of them knew that which was to be.

The maidens, attended by the knights, advanced and greeted each other courteously; then they sat down on the clover, and many that had been strangers became acquainted. They bade pour out wine for the women; and, seeing it was already noon, they rested there no longer, but rode till they came to broad pavilions, where they were well served. They stayed there the night through, till the early morning.

The folk of Bechlaren had not failed to make them ready for the many worshipful guests, and Rudeger had so ordered it that these wanted for little. The windows in the walls were thrown wide, the Castle of Bechlaren stood open, and the welcome guests rode in. The noble host bade provide good lodging for them all. Rudeger's daughter advanced with her attendants and received the queen right sweetly, and her mother, the Margravine, was there also. Many a maiden was lovingly greeted. They took hands and went together into a wide and goodly hall, below which flowed the Danube. There they sat merrily, and the breeze blew upon them.

What they did further, I cannot say. Kriemhild's knights were heard mourning that they must away so soon; it irked them sore. Ha! what good warriors rode with them from Bechlaren.

Rudeger did them right loving service. The queen gave Gotelind's daughter twelve red armlets, and, thereto, goodly raiment of the best that she had brought with

her into Etzel's land. Albeit she was bereft of the Nibelung gold, she won to her all that saw her with the small store that remained to her. Goodly were the gifts she bestowed on the followers of the host. In return, the lady Gotelind did the guests from the Rhine such honour that it had been hard to find any among them without jewels or rich apparel from her hand.

When they had eaten, and it was time to be gone, the hostess commended her true service to Etzel's wife, who, from her side, embraced the fair Margravine lovingly. And the maiden said to the queen, "Well I know, if it seem good to thee, that my father would gladly send me into the land of the Huns to be with thee." Kriemhild found her true indeed!

The horses stood ready before Bechlaren; the noble queen had taken leave of Rudeger's wife and daughter, and, with many a sweet farewell, the maidens parted; seldom did they meet again.

The folk of Mediliek brought out in their hands rich golden vessels, and offered them, full of wine, to the guests on the road, and bade them welcome. The host of the place hight Astolt, that showed them the way into Austria, by Mautern down below on the Danube; and here, again, the great queen was paid much worship.

At that point the bishop parted lovingly from his niece, after that he had prayed earnestly that she might prosper, and win herself honour even as Helca had done. Hal what fame was hers after, among the Huns!

So the strangers fared on to the Traisem, diligently waited on by Rudeger's men, till that the Huns were seen riding across the land. Mickle worship was done there to the queen.

Fast by the Traisem the King of the Huns had a goodly castle and a famous, called Traisenmauer. There Helca had dwelled and ruled more mildly than any hath done since, save Kriemhild, who likewise gave freely of her goods. Well might she live happily after her mourning, and win praise from Etzel's men, the which the heroes soon gave her to the full.

So famed was Etzel's rule that the boldest knights

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ever heard of among Christians or heathens drew ceaselessly to his court ; and all these were come with him. One saw there what one never sees now—Christian and heathen together. Howso divers their beliefs were, the king gave with such free hand that all had plenty.

TWENTY-SECOND ADVENTURE

HOW SHE WAS RECEIVED AMONG THE HUNS

SHE tarried at Traisenmauer till the fourth day, during which time the dust on the road was never still, but rose like flame from all sides. And King Etzel's men rode thither through Austria.

When it was told to the king how proudly Kriemhild advanced through the land, his old sorrow vanished clean from his mind, and he set out to meet the fair one. In front of him on the way rode many a bold knight—a vast host of Christians and heathens of many divers tongues. When they spied the queen, they came on in stately array. Russians and Greeks were there. Polacks and Wallachians spurred along, deftly managing their good horses, displaying themselves each according to the custom of his own land. From Kiow came many a knight. Savage Petschenegers were there also, that shot with their bows at the birds that flew by, and drew their arrow-heads strongly to the utmost stretch of the bow.

In Austria, by the Danube, is a town that hight Tulna. There Kriemhild learned many a strange custom that she had not seen afore, and was welcomed by not a few that, after, suffered dole through her.

The men of King Etzel's household rode before him, merry and rich-attired, fair accoutred and courtly: full four and twenty princes, great and noble. To behold their queen was all they sought. Duke Ramung of Wallachia spurred up to her with seven hundred men. They sped like birds on the wing. Then came Prince Gibek with a gallant host. Hornbog, the swift, pricked forward from the king's side to his mistress with echoing shouts, after the fashion of his country. Etzel's kinsmen, likewise, spurred hotly toward her. Next came bold Hawart of Denmark, and swift Iring, free from

guile; and Imfried of Thuringia, a brave man. These, with the twelve hundred men that made up their host, received Kriemhild with all worship. Then came Sir Blöedel, King Etzel's brother, from the land of the Huns; with great pomp he drew nigh to the queen. The next was King Etzel, with Sir Dietrich and all his knights, among the which were many good warriors faithful and true; whereat the heart of Queen Kriemhild was uplifted.

Then Sir Rudiger said to the queen, "Lady, the king would welcome thee here. Kiss them that I bid thee kiss. It is not meet that all Etzel's men be greeted on like manner."

So they lifted the queen down from her palfrey. Etzel, the great monarch, tarried no longer, but sprang from his horse with many a bold knight, and hasted joyfully toward Kriemhild. Two mighty princes, they tell us, walked by the queen and carried her train when King Etzel went toward her, and she received him sweetly with kisses. She pushed back her head-band, and her bright skin shone from out the gold, till many a man vowed that queen Helca could not have been fairer. Blöedel, the king's brother, stood close at hand, whom Rudiger, the wealthy Margrave, bade her kiss; also King Gibek, and Dietrich likewise. Twelve knights were kissed by her, and many others were kindly greeted.

All the time that Etzel stood by Kriemhild, the youths did as the custom is still. Christian knights and heathen jousted, each after his own fashion. Dietrich's men, as baseemed good warriors, hurled the whizzing shafts high above the shields with undaunted hand. Bucklers enow were pierced before the German guests. Mickle din was there of splintered lances. All the knights of the land were gathered together, and the king's guests also, among the which were many noble men. Then the great king went with the queen into a stately pavilion. The field round about was full of tents, that they might rest after their labour. Thither the heroes led the beautiful maidens after the queen, who sat down therein on a rich

couch. The Margrave had so ordered it, that they found it all goodly and fair. High beat the heart of Etzel.

What they said to each other I know not. Kriemhild's white hand lay in the king's. They sat lovingly together, but Rudeger allowed not the king to caress his bride in secret.

They bade stay the tourney. The din of the fray ended with honour, and Etzel's men went to their tents, where they had spacious lodging. That evening, and through the night, they rested in comfort, till the morning light began to shine. Then they got to horse again. Hal what sports they drave for the glory of the king! Etzel exhorted his Huns to do as honour bade.

Then they rode from Tulna to the towne of Vienna. There they found many women scanty adorned, that received Etzel's wife with much worship. All that they needed was there in plenty, and the heroes rejoiced against the festival. Lodging was given them, and the king's hightide began merrily. There was not room for all in the town, and Rudeger bade them that were not guests take up their quarters in the country round about. All this time, I trow, the king was not far from Kriemhild. Sir Dietrich, and many another knight beside, slack'd not in their endeavour to cheer the hearts of the strangers. Rudeger and his friends had good pastime.

The festival fell on a Whitsuntide, when King Etzel wedded Kriemhild in the town of Vienna. She had not, certes, had so many men to serve her in her first husband's time. With her gifts she made herself known to many that had never seen her afore, among the which were some that said to the guests, "We deemed that Kriemhild possessed naught. Yet here she doeth wonders with her wealth."

The hightide lasted seventeen days. Of no king, I ween, is it told, that he held a longer marriage feast; at the least we wot of none. All the guests wore new apparel. At home, in the Netherland, Kriemhild had never sat before so many knights; yea, I trow, that albeit Siegfried had great possessions, he had never at command so many noble warriors as stood before Etzel.

Nor had any king ever given at his own wedding such store of rich mantles, long and wide, nor such goodly vesture, whercof he had enow and to spare. For Kriemhild's sake he did it all.

Friends and strangers were of one mind. They grudged not their dearest possession. Whatso any asked for was readily given, till that many a knight, through his charity, was left bare and without clothes.

When the queen thought how once she had sat by the Rhine with her noble husband, her eyes grew wet. But she hid it, that none knew. Great honour was now hers after her mickle dole.

Howso freely the others gave, it was but a wind compared with Dietrich. What Bohtung's son had given him was now all spent. The open hand of Rudeger also did great wonders. Prince Blöedel, too, of Hungary, bade empty many a travelling chest, and scatter freely both silver and gold. Right merrily lived the warriors of the king. Werbel and Schwemmel, the court minstrels, won, each, at the hightide, when Kriemhild wore the crown beside Etzel, a thousand marks or more.

On the eighteenth morning they rode away from Vienna. Many a shield was pierced in knightly encounter by the spears which the heroes bare in their hands. So Etzel returned to the land of the Huns rejoicing. They stayed the night at ancient Haimburg. None could number the host, nor tell how many strong they rode through the land. Ha! what beautiful women they found waiting them in their home! At Misenburg, the wealthy city, they went aboard ships. The water was covered with horses and men, as if the dry land had begun to float. There the way-weary women had ease and comfort. The good ships were lashed together, that wave and water might not hurt them, and fair awnings were stretched above, as they had been still on the plain.

When word thereof came to Etzel's castle, both women and men rejoiced. Etzel's household, that Helea had aforetime ruled, passed many a happy day with Kriemhild. Noble maidens stood waiting, that since Helca's

TWENTY-THIRD ADVENTURE

HOW KRIEMHILD THOUGHT OF REVENGING HER WRONG

So, in high honour (I say sooth), they dwelled together till the seventh year. Meanwhile Kriemhild had borne a son. Nothing could have rejoiced Etzel more. She set her heart on it that he should receive Christian baptism. He was named Ortlieb, and glad was all Etzel's land.

For many a day Kriemhild ruled virtuously, even as Helca aforetime. Herrat, the foreign maiden, that still mourned bitterly for Helca in secret, taught her the customs of the country. Strangers and friends alike praised her, and owned that never queen had ruled a king's land better or more mildly. For this she was famed among the Huns till the thirteenth year.

When now she saw that none withstood her (the which a king's knights will sometimes do to their prince's wife), and that twelve kings stood ever before her, she thought on the grievous wrongs that had befallen her in her home. She remembered also the honour that was hers among the Nibelungs, and that Hagen's hand had robbed her of by Siegfried's death, and she pondered how she might work him woe.

"It were easily done, could I but bring them hither." She dreamed that she walked hand in hand with Giselher her brother, and oft, in sweet sleep, she kissed him. Evil came of it after.

It was the wicked Devil, I ween, that counselled Kriemhild to part from Gunther in friendship, and to be reconciled to him with a kiss in the land of Burgundy. She began to wet her vesture anew with hot tears. Late and early it lay on her heart, how that, through no fault of hers, she had been forced to wed a heathen. Hagen and Gunther had done this wrong to her.

Never a day passed but she longed to be revenged.

She thought, "Now I am so rich and powerful that I could do mine enemies a mischief. Were it Hagen of Trony, I were nothing loth. My heart still yearneth for my beloved. Could I but win to them that worked me woe, well would the death of my dear one be avenged. It is hard to wait," said the sorrowful woman.

All her knights, the king's men, loved her, as was meet. Her chamberlain was Eckewart, that thereby won many friends. None durst withstand Kriemhild's will.

Every day she thought to herself, "I will ask the king." She deemed that, of his goodness, he would send for her friends and bring them into the land of the Huns. None guessed her evil intent.

One night, when she lay by the king, and he held her in his arms, as was his wont, for she was to him as his life, the royal woman thought on her foes, and said to him, "My dearest lord, I would fain beg a boon of thee. I would have thee show, if I have deserved it at thy hand, that my kinsmen have found favour in thy sight."

The great king answered with true heart, "That will I readily prove to thee. All that profiteth and doth honour to the knights rejoiceth me, for through no woman's love have I won better friends."

Then said the queen, "Thou knowest well that I have noble kinsmen. It irketh me that they visit me so seldom. The folk here deem me kinless."

Whereto King Etzel answered, "My dearest wife, if it be not too far, I will invite across the Rhine whomsoever thou wouldst gladly see, and bid them hither to my land."

The woman was well content when she discovered his mind on the matter, and said, "If thou wouldst truly please me, my lord, thou wilt despatch envoys to Worms beyond the Rhine. I will inform my friends of my desire by these; so, many good knights will come hither into our land."

He answered, "Thy wish shall be obeyed. Thy kinsmen, noble Uta's sons, will not be so welcome to thee as to me. It irketh me sore that they have been

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strangers so long. If it seem good to thee, dearest wife, I will send my minstrels as envoys to thy friends in Burgundy."

He bade summon the good fiddlers straightway, that hasted to where he sat by the queen, and he told them both to go as envoys to Burgundy. He let fashion rich clothes for them; for four and twenty knights they made apparel, and the king gave them the message wherewith they were to invite Gunther and his men. And Kriemhild began to speak to them in secret.

Then said the great king, "I will tell ye what ye shall do. I send to my friends love and every good wish, and pray them to ride hither to my land. I know few other guests so dear. And if Kriemhild's kinsmen be minded to do my will, bid them fail not to come, for love of me, to my hightide, for my heart yearneth toward the brethren of my wife."

Whereto Schwemmel, the proud minstrel, answered, "When shall thy hightide fall, that we may tell thy friends yonder?"

King Etzel said, "Next midsummer."

"Thy command shall be obeyed," answered Werbel.

The queen bade summon the envoys secretly to her chamber, and spake with them. Little good came thereof. She said to the two envoys, "Ye shall deserve great reward if ye do my bidding well, and deliver the message wherewith I charge you, at home, in my land. I will make you rich in goods, and give you sumptuous apparel. See that ye say not to any of my friends at Worms, by the Rhine, that ye have ever seen me sad of my cheer, and commend my service to the heroes bold and good. Beg them to grant the king's prayer and end all my sorrow. The Huns deem me without kin. Were I a knight, I would go to them myself. Say to Gernot, my noble brother, that none is better minded to him in the world than I. Bid him bring here our best friends, that we win honour. And tell Giseler to remember that never, through his fault, did ill betide me; for which reason mine eyes are fain to behold him. Evermore I would serve him. Tell my mother, also,

TWENTY-FOURTH ADVENTURE

HOW WERBEL AND SCHWEMMEL BROUGHT THE MESSAGE

WHEN Etzel sent his fiddlers to the Rhine, the news flew from land to land. By means of swift messengers, he invited guests to his hightide. There many met their death.

The envoys rode from the country of the Huns to the Burgundians, even to the three noble kings and their men, to bid them to Etzel's court, and hasted on the way. They came to Bechlaren, where they were well seen to, and nothing lacked to their entertainment. Rudeger and Gotelind, and the Margrave's child also, sent their greeting by them to the Rhine. Not without gifts went Etzel's men forth, that they might fare the better on the road. Rudeger commended him to Uta and her sons; never Margrave was so true to them as he. To Brunhild, likewise, they commended their true service and their steadfast faith and love. When the envoys had heard the message, they set out again, and the Margravine prayed God in heaven to guard them.

Or they left Bavaria, swift Werbel sought out the bishop: what greeting he sent to his friends by the Rhine I know not. But he gave his red gold to the envoys out of love, and let them ride on. Bishop Pilgerin said, "Right gladly would I see my sister's sons here. Seldom, alack! can I win to them at the Rhine."

I cannot tell by what road they fared through the land; but none took from them their silver and fine clothes, for all feared the wrath of their master: the great king was mighty and of high lineage.

Within twelve days Werbel and Schwemmel reached Worms on the Rhine. And the kings and their men were told the news, that foreign envoys were come. Thereupon Gunther, the prince of the Rhine, began to

question his folk, and said, "Who will tell us whence these strangers are come riding into the land?"

And none knew, till that Hagen of Trony saw the envoys, and said to Gunther, "We shall have news, I promise thee, for I have seen Etzel's fiddlers here. Thy sister hath sent them. Let us welcome them right heartily for their master's sake."

They rode straight to the palace. Never goodlier show made the minstrels of a king. Gunther's courtiers hastened to meet them, and gave them lodging, and bade see to their gear. Their travelling clothes were rich and well fashioned. With all honour they might have gone before the king therein. Yet they scorned to wear them at the court, and asked whether any desired them. There was no lack of needy folk, that took them gladly, and to these they were sent. Then the guests clad them in rich apparel, as beseemed the envoys of a king.

Etzel's men got leave to go before Gunther. They that saw them rejoiced. Hagen sprang from his seat and ran to them, and received them lovingly, for which the youths thanked him. He asked for news of Etzel and his men, whereto the fiddlers made answer, "The land was never more prosperous, nor the people more joyful; know that of a surety."

He led them before the king, through the hall full of folk, and the guests were well received, as envoys should ever be in foreign kings' lands. Werbel found many a knight by Gunther.

The gracious prince greeted them, and said, "Ye are both welcome, Etzel's minstrels, ye and your followers. Wherefore hath the mighty Etzel sent you into Burgundy?"

They bowed before him, and Werbel answered, "My dear master, and Kriemhild thy sister, commend their service to thee. With true intent they have sent us hither to you, O knights."

Then said the noble prince, "I rejoice at the tidings. How fareth it with Etzel, and Kriemhild my sister?"

Whereto the fiddler answered, "Never was king of any land better or happier, nor his kinsmen nor vassals;

know that for certain. Right glad were they when we set forth on this journey."

"Thank him and my sister for their greeting. I rejoice that it is well with the king and his folk, for I asked, much fearing."

The two young kings were also come in, and had heard the news for the first time. Giseller, the youth, was glad to see the envoys, for love of his sister, and said to them kindly, "Ye be heartily welcome. If ye came oftener to the Rhine, ye would find friends worth the seeing. Small ill should betide you here."

"I trow it well," answered Schwemmel. "Word of mine cannot tell thee how right lovingly Etzel commendeth him to thee, and eke thy sister, that is holden in high esteem. The king's wife biddeth thee remember thy love and faith, and that thou wert ever true to her in heart and soul. And, first of all, we are sent to the king, to invite you to ride into Etzel's land, and Sir Gernot with you. Mighty Etzel commanded me to say to you all that, even if ye desire not to see your sister, he would fain learn what wrong he hath done you, that ye are such strangers to him and his court. Had ye never known the queen, he deserveth no less of you than that ye come to see him. If ye consent to this, ye shall please him well."

And Gunther answered, "A sennight from now I will let thee know what I and my friends have determined on. Go meanwhile to thy lodging and rest."

But Werbel said, "Might we not, ere we seek repose, win audience of great Uta?"

Whereto the noble Giseller answered courteously, "None shall hinder you, for in this ye shall have done my mother's will. For the sake of my sister, Queen Kriemhild, she will see you gladly. Right welcome shall ye be"

Giseller brought them before the lady, who rejoiced to see envoys from the land of the Huns. Kindly and lovingly she greeted them, and the courtly messengers and good delivered their tidings. "My mistress commendeth to thee," said Schwemmel, "her service and

her true love. Could she but have sight of thee oftener, naught on earth were dearer to her."

But the queen answered, "That cannot be. The noble king's wife dwelleth alack! too far from me. Blessed evermore be she and Etzel. Fail not to send me word of your departure, when ye are about to return home. It is long since envoys were so welcome as ye are." And the youths promised that they would do it.

The Huns went to their lodging. Meanwhile, the great king had sent for his friends, and noble Gunther asked his men how the message pleased them. And many of them began to say that he might well ride into Etzel's land. The best among them counselled him thereto—all save Hagen. Him it irked exceedingly. He said to the king apart, "Ye strike at your own life. Surely ye know what we have done. Evermore we stand in danger from Kriemhild. I smote her husband dead with my hand. How dare we ride into Etzel's land?"

But the great king answered, "My sister forgot her anger. With a loving kiss she forgave us for all we had done to her or she rode away. Hath she aught against any, it is against thee alone, Hagen."

"Be not deceived," said Hagen, "by the words of the Hunnish envoys. If thou goest to see Kriemhild, thou mayst lose thine honour and thy life. The wife of King Etzel hath a long memory."

Then Gernot spake out before the assembly, "Because thou fearest death with reason among the Huns, it were ill done on our part to keep away from our sister."

And Sir Giselher said to the knight, "Since thou knowest thyself guilty, friend Hagen, stay thou at home, and guard thyself well, and let them that dare, journey with us to the Huns."

Then the knight of Trony fell in a passion. "None that ye take with you will be readier to ride to the court than I. And well I will prove it, since ye will not be turned."

But knight Rumolt, the cook, said, "Strangers and friends ye can entertain at home, at your pleasure. For

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here is abundance. Hagen, I trow, hath never held you back afore. If ye will not follow him in this, be counselled by Rumolt (for your true and loving servant am I) and tarry here as I would have ye do, and leave King Etzel yonder by Kriemhild. Where in the wide world could ye be better? Here ye are safe from your enemies. Ye can adorn your bodies with goodly vesture, drink the best wine, and woo fair women. Thereto, ye are given meats, the best on earth that ever king ate. The land is prosperous. Ye may give up Etzel's hightide with honour, and live merrily at home with your friends. Even had ye nothing else to feast on here, I could always give you your fill of one dish—cutlets fried in oil. This is Rumolt's advice, my masters, since there is danger among the Huns. Never again, I trow, will Kriemhild be your friend, nor have you and Hagen deserved otherwise. Stay here, ye knights, else ye may rue it. Ye shall find in the end that my counsel is not bad: wherefore heed my words. Rich are your lands. Here ye can redeem your pledges better than among the Huns. Who knoweth how things stand there. Abide where ye are. That is Rumolt's counsel."

"We will not stay here," said Gernot. "Since my sister and great Etzel have bidden us so lovingly, why should we refuse? He that will not with us may tarry at home."

"By my troth," said Rumolt, "I, for one, will never cross the Rhine for Etzel's hightide. Why should I hazard what I have? I will live while I may."

"I am of thy mind for that," said knight Örtwin. "I will help thee to order things at home."

And there were many that would not go, and said, "God guard you among the Huns."

The king was wroth when he saw they desired to take their ease at home. "We will go none the less. The prudent are safe in the midst of danger."

Hagen answered. "Be not wroth at my word. Whatever betide, I counsel thee in good faith to ride strongly armed to the Huns. Since thou wilt not be turned, summon the best men thou canst find, or knowest of, among

thy vassals, and from among them I will choose a thousand good knights, that thou come not in scathe by Kriemhild's anger."

"I will do this," said the king straightway. And he bade messengers ride abroad through the country. Three thousand or more heroes they brought back with them.

They thought not to meet so grim a doom. Merrily they rode into Gunther's land. To all them that were to journey to the Huns horses and apparel were given. The king found many willing. Hagen of Trony bade Dankwart, his brother, lead eighty of their knights to the Rhine. They came in proud array, bringing harness and vesture with them. Bold Folker, a noble minstrel, armed with thirty of his men for the journey. A king might well have worn their raiment. He told Gunther that these would also visit the Huns.

I will tell you who Folker was. He was a noble knight, and many good warriors in Burgundy were his vassals. He was called a minstrel because he played on the viol.

Hagen chose a thousand that he knew well, and the prowess of whose hand he had seen in grim battle, and in warlike deeds. None could deny their valour.

It irked Kriemhild's envoys to be delayed, for they greatly feared their master, and every day they desired to be gone. But Hagen kept them for his crafty ends. He said to his lord, "We must beware of letting them go or be ready to follow them, in a sennight. We shall be aser so, if they mean us harm. Kriemhild will not have be time to contrive our hurt. Or, if she be minded hereto, it may go ill with her, since we lead with us to the Huns so many chosen men."

Shields and saddles, and all the vesture they were to take with them, to Etzel's land, were now ready, and Kriemhild's envoys were bidden to Gunther's presence. Then they appeared, Gernot said, "The king will obey Etzel's wish. We go gladly to his hightide to see our ster. She may count on us."

Gunther asked, "Can ye tell us when the hightide leeth, or when we must set forth?"

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And Schwemmel answered, "Next midsummer, without fail."

The king gave them leave, for the first time, to visit Brunhild, but Folker, to please her, said them nay.

"Queen Brunhild is not well enow for you to see her," said the good knight. "Wait till morning, and ye shall win audience of her." They had fain beheld her, but could not.

Then the rich prince, that he might show favour to the envoys, bade bring thither of his own bounty gold upon broad shields. He had plenty thereof. His friends also gave them rich gifts. Giselher and Gernot, Gary and Ortwin, let it be seen that they could give freely. They offered such costly things to the envoys that these durst not take them, for fear of their master.

Then said Werbel to the king, "Keep your gifts, O king, in your own land. We may not carry them with us. My lord forbade us to take aught. Thereto, we have small need." But the prince of the Rhine was angry because they refused so great a king's gift. So, at the last, they were constrained to take his gold and vesture, and carry them home into Etzel's land.

They desired to see Uta or they departed. Giselher, the youth, brought the minstrels before his mother, and the lady bade them say that she rejoiced to hear how that Kriemhild was had in worship. For the sake of Kriemhild, that she loved, and of King Etzel, the queen gave the envoys girdles and gold. Well might they receive this, for with true heart it was offered.

The envoys had now taken leave of both men and women, and rode merrily forward to Swabia. Gernot sent his warriors with them thus far, that none might do them a hurt.

When their escort parted from them, Etzel's might kept them safe by the way, that none robbed them of horses or vesture. Then they spurred swiftly to the land of the Huns. Them that they knew for friends, they told that the Burgundians from the Rhine would pass there shortly. They brought the tidings also to Bishop Pilgerin.

When they rode down by Bechlaren, they failed not to

send word to Rudeger and Dame Gotelind, the Margrave's wife, that was merry of her cheer because she was to see the guests so soon.

The minstrels were seen spurring through the land. They found Etzel in his town of Gran. They gave the king, that grew red for joy, the greetings that had been sent him.

When the queen heard for certain that her brothers would come, she was well content, and requited the minstrels with goodly gifts, which did her honour. She said, "Now tell me, both of you, Werbel and Schwemmel, *which of my friends, of the best that we have bidden, come to the hightide.* What said Hagen when he heard the news?"

"He came to the council one morning early. He had little good to say of the hightide. It was named by grim Hagen the death-ride. Thy brothers, the three kings, come in merry mood. Who further ate with them I cannot say. Folker, the bold minstrel, is one."

"I had made shift to do without Folker," said the king's wife. "Hagen I esteem; he is a good knight. I am right glad that we shall see him here."

Then Kriemhild went to the king, and spake to him right sweetly, "How doth the news please thee, dearest lord? All my heart's desire shall now be satisfied."

"Thy will is my pleasure," answered the king. "I were less glad had it been mine own kinsmen. Through love of thy dear brethren all my cares have vanished."

Etzel's officers bade fit up palace and hall everywhere with seats for the welcome guests. They took much joy from the king.

TWENTY-FIFTH ADVENTURE

HOW THE KINGS JOURNEYED TO THE HUNS

BUT of their doings there we shall tell no further. High hearted heroes never rode so proudly into any king's land. All that they wanted they had, both of weapons and apparel. They say that the Prince of the Rhine equipped a thousand and three score of his knights, and nine thousand squires for the hightide. They that tarried at home were soon to weep for them.

Whilst they carried their harness across the court at Worms, an old bishop from Spire said to fair Uta, "Our friends will ride to the hightide. God help them there."

Then noble Uta said to her children, "Stay here, good heroes. Last night I dreamed an evil dream, that all the birds in this land were dead"

"He that goeth by dreams," said Hagen, "careth little for his honour. I would have my noble master take leave without delay, and ride forward merrily into Etzel's land. There kings need heroes' hands to serve them, and we must see Kriemhild's hightide."

Hagen counselled them now to the journey, but he rued it later. He had withstood them, but that Gernot had mocked him. He minded him on Siegfried, Kriemhild's husband, and said, "It is for that, that Hagen durst not go."

"But Hagen said, "I hold not back from fear. If ye will have it so, heroes, go forward. I am ready to ride with you to Etzel's land." Soon many a helmet and shield were pierced by him.

The ships lay waiting for the kings and their men. They carried their vesture down to them, and were busy till eventide. Merry of cheer they quitted their homes. On the camping ground across the Rhine they pitched tents and put up booths. The king's fair wife entreated

him to stay, for much she loved him. Flutes and trumpets rang out early in the morning, and gave the signal to be gone. Many a true lover was torn from his loved one's arms by King Etzel's wife.

King Uta's sons had a liegeman bold and true. When he saw they would forth, he spake to the king secretly, "Much I grieve that thou goest to this hightime." Rumolt was his name, a chosen knight. He said, "To whom wilt thou leave thy folk and thy land? Alack! that none can turn you knights from your purpose! Kriemhild's message never pleased me."

"I leave my land and child in thy charge. I will have it so. Comfort them that thou seest weeping Etzel's wife will do us no hurt!"

The king held a council with his chief men or he started. He left not land and castles defenceless. Many a chosen knight stayed behind to guard them.

The horses stood ready for the kings and their followers. With sweet kisses parted many whose hearts still beat high. Noble women soon wept for them. Wailing was there, with tears now. The queen bare her child in her arms to the king. "How canst thou leave us both desolate? Stay for our sake," said the sorrowful woman.

"Weep not for me, but be of good cheer here at home. We shall return shortly, safe and sound."

So they waited no longer, but lovingly took leave of their friends. When the bold knights were gotten to horse, many women stood sorrowing. Their hearts told them it was a long parting. None is merry of his cheer when bitter woe is at hand.

The swift Burgundians rode off, and there was hurrying in the land. On either side the mountains both men and women wept. But, for all the folk could do, they pressed forward merrily. A thousand of the Nibelung knights in habergeons went with them, that had left fair women at home, the which they never saw more. The wounds of Siegfried gaped in Kriemhild's heart.

The Christian faith was still weak in those days. Nevertheless they had a chaplain with them to say mass.

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He returned alive, escaped from much peril. The rest tarried dead among the Huns. Gunther's men shaped their course toward the Main, up through East Frankland. Hagen led them, that knew the way well. Their Marshal was Dankwart, the knight of Burgundy. As they rode from East Frankland to Schwanfeld, the princes and their kinsmen, knights of worship, were known by their stately mien.

On the twelfth morning the king reached the Danube. Hagen of Trony rode in front of the rest. He was the helper and comforter of the Nibelungs. The bold knight alighted there on the bank, and tied his horse to a tree. The river was swoln, there was no boat, and the knights were troubled how to win across. The water was too wide. Many a bold knight sprang to the ground.

"Mischief might easily befall thee here, King of Rhineland," said Hagen; "thou canst see for thyself that the river is swoln, and the current very strong. I fear me we shall lose here to-day not a few good knights."

"Wherefore daunt me, Hagen?" said the proud king. "Of thy charity fright us no more. Look out a ford for us, that we bring both horses and baggage safe across."

"I am not so weary of life," said Hagen, "that I desire to drown in these broad waves. Many a man in Etzel's land shall first fall by my hand. That is more to my mind. Stay by the water side, ye proud knights and good, and I will seek the ferrymen by the river, that will bring us safe into Gelfrat's land."

Thereupon stark Hagen took his good shield. He was well armed. He bare his buckler. He laced on his shining helmet. He wore a broad weapon above his harness, that cut grimly with both its edges.

Then he sought the ferrymen up and down. He heard the splash of water and began to listen. It came from mermaidens that bathed their bodies in a clear brook to cool them.

Hagen spied them, and stole up secretly. When they

were ware of him, they fled. Well pleased were they to escape him. The hero took their garments, but did them no further annoy.

Then one of the mermaids (she hight Hadburg) said, "We will tell thee, noble Hagen, if thou give us our clothes again, how ye shall all fare on this journey among the Huns."

They swayed like birds in the water before him. He deemed them wise and worthy of belief, so that he trusted the more what they told him. They informed him concerning all he asked them. Hadburg said, "Ye may ride safely into Etzel's land; I pledge my faith thereon, that never yet heroes journeyed to any court to win more worship. I say sooth."

Hagen's heart was uplifted at her word; he gave them back their clothes and stayed no longer. When they had put on their wonderful raiment, they told him the truth about the journey.

The other mermaid, that hight Sieglind, said, "Be warned, Hagen, son of Aldrian. My aunt hath lied to thee because of her clothes. If ye go to the Huns, ye are ill-advised. Turn while there is time, for ye bold knights have been bidden that ye may die in Etzel's land. Who rideth thither hath death at his hand."

But Hagen said, "Your deceit is vain. How should we all tarry there, dead, through the hate of one woman?"

Then they began to foretell it plainer, and Hadburg said also, "Ye are doomed. Not one of you shall escape, save the king's chaplain: this we know for a truth. He, only, shall return alive into Gunther's land."

Grimly wroth spake bold Hagen then. "It were a pleasant thing to tell my masters that we must all perish among the Huns! Show us a way across the water, thou wisest of womankind."

She answered, "Since thou wilt not be turned from the journey, up yonder by the river standeth an inn. Within it is a boatman; there is none beside."

He betook him thither to ask further. But the mermaiden cried after the wrothful knight, "Stay, Sir

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Hagen. Thou art too hasty. Hearken first concerning the way. The lord of this march hight Elsy. The name of his brother is Gelfrat, a prince in Bavaria. It might go hard with thee if thou wentest through his march. Look well to thyself, and proceed warily with the boatman. He is so grim of his mood that he will kill thee, if thou speak him not fair. If thou wouldst have him ferry thee across, give him hire. He guardeth this land, and is Gelfrat's friend. If he come not straightway, cry across the river to him that thou art Amelrich; he was a good knight, that a feud drove from this land. The boatman will come when he heareth that name."

Proud Hagen thanked the women for their warning and their counsel, and said no more. He went up the river's bank, till he came to an inn that stood on the far side. He began to shout across the water, "Boatman, row me over, and I will give thee, for thy meed, an armlet of red gold. I must across."

The boatman was so rich that he needed not to serve for hire, and seldom took reward from any. His men also were overweening, and Hagen was left standing on the bank of the river.

Thereupon he shouted so loud that all the shore rang with it. He was a stark man. "Row across for Amelrich. I am Elsy's liegeman, that, for a feud, fled the country." He swung the armlet aloft on his sword—it was of red gold, bright and shining—that they might ferry him over to Gelfrat's march. At this the haughty boatman himself took the oar, for he was greedy and covetous of gain, the which bringeth oft to a bad end. He thought to win Hagen's red gold, but won, in lieu thereof, a grim death by his sword.

He rowed over to the shore with mighty strokes. When he found not him that had been named, he fell in a fury; he saw Hagen, and spake wrothfully to the hero, "Thy name may be Amelrich, but, or I greatly err, thy face is none of his. By one father and one mother he was my brother. Since thou hast deceived me, thou canst stay where thou art."

"Nay, for the love of God," said Hagen. "I am a stranger knight that have the charge of other warriors. Take thy fee and row me over, for I am a friend."

But the boatman answered, "I will not. My dear masters have foemen, wherefore I must bring no stranger across. If thou lovest thy life, step out on to the shore again."

"Nay now," said Hagen, "I am sore bested. Take, as a keepsake, this goodly gold, and ferry us over with our thousand horses and our many men."

But the grim boatman answered, "Never!" He seized an oar, mickle and broad, and smote Hagen (soon he rued it), that he staggered and fell on his knees. Seldom had he of Trony encountered so grim a ferryman. Further, to anger the bold stranger, he brake a boat-pole over his head, for he was a strong man. But he did it to his own hurt.

Grimly wroth, Hagen drew a weapon from the sheath, and cut off his head, and threw it on the ground. The Burgundians were soon ware of the tidings.

In the same moment that he slew the ferryman, the boat was caught by the current, which irked him no little, for he was weary or he could bring her head round, albeit Gunther's man rowed stoutly. With swift strokes he sought to turn it, till the oar brake in his hand. He strove to reach the knights on the strand, but had no other oar. Ha! how nimbly he bound it together with the thong of his shield, a narrow broidered band, and rowed to a wood down the river.

There he found his masters waiting on the beach. Many a valiant knight ran to meet him, and greeted him joyfully. But when they saw the boat full of blood from the grim wound he had given the ferryman, they began to question him.

When Gunther saw the hot blood heaving in the boat, he said quickly, "Tell me what thou hast done with the ferryman. I wene he hath fallen by thy strength."

But he answered with a lie, "I found the boat by a waste meadow, and loosed it. I have seen no ferryman this day, nor hath any suffered hurt at my hand."

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The news of his boatman's death had reached Gelfrat. Stark Elsy had heard it likewise. Wroth were they both. They summoned their knights, that were soon ready. Straightway, as I will tell you, a mighty host, strongly armed, rode to them that had suffered scathe. To Gelfrat came more than seven hundred. When these set out to pursue their grim foemen, the leaders spurred hotly after the strangers, to be revenged. By the which they lost many friends.

Hagen of Trony had so ordered it (how could a hero guard his kinsmen better) that he brought up the rear with his vassals, and with Dankwart, his brother. It was wisely done.

The day was far spent; the light failed. He feared greatly for his comrades. They rode through Bavaria behind shields, and shortly after were set upon.

On both sides, and close behind, they heard the trample of hoofs, and spurred on. Then said bold Dankwart, "They will fall on us here. Ye did well to bind on your helmets."

So they stopped, as needs was. Then they saw the glitter of shields in the dark. Hagen held his peace no longer, "Who follow us by the way?"

Gelfrat had to answer. Said the Margrave of Bavaria, "We seek our foemen and follow on their track. I know not who slew my boatman to-day. He was a valiant knight, and I grieve for his loss."

Then said Hagen of Trony, "Was the boatman thine? He would not ferry me over. The blame is mine. I slew him. Certes, I had need. I had nigh met my death at his hand. I offered him gold and raiment, Sir Knight, as his meed for rowing us into thy land. So angry was he that he struck me with his great oar, whereat I was grim enow. Then I seized my sword, and defended me from his wrath with a grisly wound, whereby the hero perished. I will answer for it as seemeth good to thee."

So they fell to fighting, for they were wroth. "I knew well," said Gelfrat, "when Gunther crossed with his followers, that Hagen's insolence would do us some

hurt. Now he shall not escape us. His death shall pay for the boatman's." Gelfrat and Hagen couched their lances to thrust above their shields. Deadly was their hate. Elsy and Dankwart met gallantly, and proven on each other was their might. They strove grimly. How could heroes have fought better? Bold Hagen was knocked back from off his horse by a strong blow from Gelfrat's hand. The poultr brake asunder and he fell.

From the followers also rang the clash of spears. Hagen sprang up again where he had fallen on the grass from the blow; not little was his wrath against Gelfrat. I know not who held their horses. Hagen and Gelfrat were both on the ground. They ran at each other, and their attendants helped them and fought by them. For all Hagen's fierce onset, the noble Margrave hewed an ell's length from his shield, that the sparks flew bright. Gunther's man was well-nigh slain. Then he cried aloud to Dankwart, "Help! dear brother. I perish by the hand of a hero."

Bold Dankwart answered, "I will decide between you." The knight spurred toward them, and smote Gelfrat such a blow that he fell dead.

Elsy would have avenged him, but he and his followers were overcome. His brother was slain, and he himself wounded. Full eighty of his warriors he left there with grim death; the prince had to flee before Gunther's men.

When the Bavarians gave way, there was heard the echo of grisly strokes. The men of Trony chased their foes, and they that stayed not to answer for it had little ease by the way.

But while they pursued them, Dankwart said, "Now turn we, and let them ride. They are wet with blood. Let us join our friends. Truly it were best."

When they came again where the fight had been, Hagen of Trony said, "Let us see now, ye heroes, who are amissing, and whom we have lost through Gelfrat's anger."

They had four to mourn for, that they had lost.

TWENTY-SEVENTH ADVENTURE

HOW THEY CAME TO BECHLAREN

THE Margrave went to find his wife and daughter, and told them the good news that he had heard, how that their queen's brethren were coming to the house.

"Dear love," said Rudeger, "receive the high and noble kings well when they come here with their followers. Hagen, Gunther's man, thou shalt also greet fair. There is one with them that hight Dankwart; another hight Folker, a man of much worship. These six thou shalt kiss—thou and my daughter. Entreat the warriors courteously."

The women promised it, nothing loth. They took goodly apparel from their chests, wherein to meet the knights. The fair women made haste enow. Their cheeks needed little false colour. They wore fillets of bright gold on their heads, fashioned like rich wreaths, that the wind might not ruffle their beautiful hair. They were dainty and fresh.

Now leave we the women busied on this wise. There was mickle spurring across the plain among Rudeger's friends till they found the princes. These were well received in the Margrave's land. Rudeger cried joyfully as he went toward them, "Ye be welcome, ye knights, and all your men. Right glad am I to see you in my home."

The warriors thanked him with true heart void of hate. He showed them plainly they were welcome. To Hagen he gave special greeting, for he knew him from aforetime. He did the same to Folker of Burgundy. He welcomed Dankwart also. Then said that knight, "If thou take us in, who will see to our followers from Worms beyond the Rhine?"

The Margrave answered, "Have no fear on that head. All that ye have with you, horses, silver and apparel, shall be so well guarded that ye shall not lose a single

custom, and went into separate rooms. The table was made ready in the great hall, and willing service was done to the strangers.

To show love to the guests, the Margravine went to table with them. She left her daughter with the damsels, as was seemly, albeit it irked the guests to see her no longer.

When they had all drunk and eaten, they brought the fair ones into the hall again, and there was no lack of sweet words. Folker, a knight bold and good, spake plenty of them. This same fiddler said openly, "Great Margrave, God hath done well by thee, for he hath given thee a right beautiful wife, and happy days. Were I a king," said the minstrel, "and wore a crown, I would choose thy sweet daughter for my queen. She would be the choice of my heart, for she is fair to look upon, and, thereto, noble and good."

The Margrave answered, "How should a king covet my dear daughter? My wife and I are both strangers here, and have naught to give. What availeth then her beauty?"

But said Gernot, the courteous man, "Might I choose where I would, such a wife were my heart's desire."

Then said Hagen graciously, "It is time Giselher wedded. Of such high lineage is the noble Margravine, that we would gladly serve her, I and his men, if she wore the crown in Burgundy."

The word pleased both Rudeger and Gotelind greatly. Their hearts were uplifted. So it was agreed among the heroes that noble Giselher should take her to wife; the which a king might well do without shame.

If a thing be right, who can withstand it? They bade the maiden before them, and they swore to give her to him, whereupon he vowed to cherish her. They gave her castles and lands for her share. The king and Gernot sware with the hand that it should be even as they had promised.

Then said the Margrave, "Since I have no castles, I can only prove me your true friend evermore. I will give my daughter as much silver and gold as an hundred

sumpters may carry, that ye warriors may, with honour, be content."

Then the twain were put in a circle, as the custom was. Many a young knight stood opposite in merry mood, and thought in his heart as young folk will. They asked the lovely maiden if she would have the hero. She was half sorry, yet her heart inclined to the goodly man. She was shamefast at the question, as many a maid hath been.

Rudeger her father counselled her to say "yes," and to take him gladly. Giseller, the youth, was not slow to clasp her to him with his white hands. Yet how little while she had him!

Then said the Margrave, "Great and noble kings, I will give you my child to take with you, for this were fittest, when ye ride home again into your land." And it was so agreed.

The din of tourney was bidden cease. The damsels were sent to their chambers, and the guests to sleep and to take their rest till the day. Then meats were made ready, for their host saw well to their comfort.

When they had eaten, they would have set out again for the country of the Huns, but Rudeger said, "Go not, I pray you. Tarry here yet a while, for I had never dearer guests."

Dankwart answered, "It may not be. Where couldst thou find the meat, the bread and the wine, for so many knights?"

But when the host heard him, he said, "Speak not of that. Deny me not, my dear lords. I can give you, and all them that are with you, meat for fourteen days. Little hath King Etzel ever taken of my substance."

Albeit they made excuse, they had to tarry till the fourth morning. He gave both horses and apparel so freely, that the fame of it spread abroad.

But longer than this it could not last, for they must needs forth. Rudeger was not sparing of his goods. If any craved for aught, none denied him. Each got his desire.

The attendants brought the saddled horses to the

door. There many stranger knights joined them, shield in hand, to ride with them to Etzel's court. To each of the noble guests Rudeger offered a gift, or he left the hall. He had wherewithal to live in honour and give freely. Upon Giseller he had bestowed his fair daughter. He gave to Gernot a goodly weapon enow, that he wielded well afterward in strife. The Margrave's wife grudged him not the gift, yet Rudeger, or long, was slain thereby.

To Gunther, the valiant knight, he gave a coat of mail, that did the rich king honour, albeit he seldom took gifts. He bowed before Rudeger and thanked him.

Gotelind offered Hagen a fair gift, as was fitting, since the king had taken one, that he might not fare to the hightide without a keepsake from her, but he refused.

"Naught that I ever saw would I so fain bear away with me as yonder shield on the wall. I would gladly carry it into Etzel's land."

When the Margravine heard Hagen's word, it minded her on her sorrow, and she fell to weeping. She thought sadly on the death of Nudung, that Wnuch had slain; and her heart was heavy.

She said to the knight, "I will give thee the shield. Would to God he yet lived that once bore it! He died in battle. I must ever weep when I think on him, for my woman's heart is sore."

The noble Margravine rose from her seat, and took down the shield with her white hands and carried it to Hagen, that used it as a hero should. A covering of bright stuff lay over its device. The light never shone on better shield. It was so rich with precious stones, that had any wanted to buy it, it had cost him at the least a thousand marks.

The knight bade his attendants bear it away. Then came his brother Dankwart, to whom the Margrave's daughter gave richly brodered apparel, that afterward he wore merrily among the Huns.

None had touched any of these things but for love of the host that offered them so kindly. Yet, or long, they bare him such hate that they slew him.

Bold Folker then stepped forth with knightly bearing and stood before Gotelind with his viol. He played a sweet tune and sang her his song. Then he took his leave and left Bechlaren. But first the Margravine bade them bring a drawer nearer. Of loving gifts now hear the tale. She took therefrom twelve armlets, and drew them over his hand, saying, "These shalt thou take with thee and wear for my sake at Etzel's court. When thou comest again, I will hear how thou hast served me at the hightide." Well he did her behest.

The host said to the guests, "That ye may journey the safer, I will myself escort you, and see that none fall on you by the way." And forthwith they loaded his sumpter. He stood ready for the road with five hundred men, mounted and equipped. These he led merrily to the hightide. Not one of them came back alive to Bechlaren.

He took leave with sweet kisses. The same did Giselher, as love bade him. They took the fair women in their arms. Or long, many a damsel wept for them.

The windows were flung wide over all, for the host and his men were gotten to horse. Their hearts, I ween, foreboded their bitter woe, and many a wife and many a maiden wept sore. They sorrowed for many a dear friend that was never seen more at Bechlaren. Yet merrily they rode down the valley by the Danube into the land of the Huns.

Then said noble Rudeger to the Burgundians, "We must delay no longer to send news of our advance. Nothing could rejoice King Etzel more."

The swift envoys pressed down through Austria, and soon the folk knew, far and near, that the heroes were on their way from Worms beyond the Rhine. It was welcome news to the king's vassals. The envoys spurred forward with the tidings that the Nibelungs were come to the Huns.

"Receive them well, Kriemhild, my wife. Thy brethren are come to show thee great honour."

Kriemhild stood at a window and looked out as a friend might for friends. Many drew thither from her

all alike welcome. No good cometh of our journey to this hightide."

She answered, "Let him that is glad to see thee welcome thee. I will not greet thee as a friend. What bringest thou for me from Worms, beyond the Rhine, that thou shouldst be so greatly welcome?"

"This is news," said Hagen, "that knights should bring thee gifts. Had I thought of it, I had easily brought thee something. I am rich enow."

"Tell me what thou hast done with the Nibelung hoard. That, at the least, was mine own. Ye should have brought it with you into Etzel's land."

"By my troth, lady, I have not touched the Nibelung hoard this many a year. My masters bade me sink it in the Rhine. There it must bide till the day of doom."

Then said the queen, "I thought so. Little hast thou brought thereof, albeit it was mine own, and held by me aforetime. Many a sad day I have lived for lack of it and its lord."

"I bring thee the devil!" cried Hagen. "My shield and my harness were enow to carry, and my bright helmet, and the sword in my hand. I have brought thee naught further."

"I speak not of my treasure, because I desire the gold. I have so much to give that I need not thy offerings. A murder and a double theft—it is these that I, unhappiest of women, would have thee make good to me."

Then said the queen to all the knights, "None shall bear weapons in this hall. Deliver them to me, ye knights, that they be taken in charge."

"Not so, by my troth," said Hagen; "I crave not the honour, great daughter of kings, to have thee bear my shield and other weapons to safe keeping. Thou art a queen here. My father taught me to guard them myself."

"Woe is me!" cried Kriemhild. "Why will not Hagen and my brother give up their shields? They are warned. If I knew him that did it, he should die."

Sir Dietrich answered wrathfully then, "I am he that warned the noble kings, and bold Hagen, the man of Burgundy. Do thy worst, thou devil's wife, I care not!"

Kriemhild was greatly ashamed, for she stood in bitter fear of Dietrich. She went from him without a word, but with swift and wrathful glances at her foes.

Then two knights clasped hands—the one was Dietrich, the other Hagen. Dietrich, the valiant warrior, said courteously, "I grieve to see thee here, since the queen hath spoken thus."

Hagen of Trony answered, "It will all come right."

So the bold men spake together, and King Etzel saw them, and asked, "I would know who yonder knight is that Dietrich welcometh so lovingly. He beareth him proudly. How so is his father hight, he is, certes, a goodly warrior."

One of Kriemhild's men answered the king, "He was born at Trony. The name of his father was Aldrian. Albeit now he goeth gently, he is a grim man. I will prove to thee yet that I lie not."

"How shall I find him so grim?" He knew nothing, as yet, of all that the queen contrived against her kinsmen: by reason whereof not one of them escaped alive from the Huns.

"I know Hagen well. He was my vassal. Praise and mickle honour he won here by me. I made him a knight, and gave him my gold. For that he proved him faithful, I was ever kind to him. Wherefore I may well know all about him. I brought two noble children captive to this land—him and Walter of Spain. Here they grew to manhood. Hagen I sent home again. Walter fled with Hildegund."

So he mused on the good old days, and what had happed long ago, for he had seen Hagen, that did him stark service in his youth. Yet now that he was old, he lost by him many a dear friend.

with so few. Stark and bold as is Hagen of Trony, much starker is he that sitteth by him, Folker the fiddler by name, a wicked man. Ye shall not so lightly overcome them."

When they heard her word, four hundred knights more did on their armour, for the queen was eager to do her enemies a hurt. Soon they came in sore straits. When she saw them well armed, she said to them, "Stand still a while and wait. I will go out to my foes with my crown on. Harken while I upbraid Hagen of Trony, Gunther's man, with what he hath done to me. I know him for too proud a knight to deny it. After that, I care not what befalleth him."

Then the fiddler, a bold minstrel, saw the queen coming down the stair from the house, and said to his comrade, "Now see, friend Hagen, how she that hath falsely bidden us to this land, cometh toward us. Never have I beheld, with a king's wife, so many men, sword in hand, as for strife. Knowest thou, friend Hagen, that they hate thee? I counsel thee to look to thy life and thine honour. Certes, it were well. Methinketh they be wrothful of their mood. Many among them have shoulders broad enow. Who would save his life had best do it betimes. I ween they wear harness below their silk, whereof I hear none declare the meaning."

But Hagen, the bold man, answered angrily, "Well I know that it is against me they carry their bright weapons in their hands. But, for all that, I will yet ride back to Burgundy. Now say, friend Folker, wilt thou stand by me, if Kriemhild's men fall on me? Tell me, as thou lovest me. To thy service thou wouldst bind me evermore."

"I will help thee truly," answered the minstrel; "if I saw the king coming with all his warriors, I would not, while I lived, stir a foot from thy side through fear."

"God in heaven quit thee, noble Folker! If they fight with me, what need I more. Since thou wilt help me, as I have heard thee promise, these knights had best walk warily."

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"Now rise we from our seat, and let her pass," said the minstrel. "She is a queen. Do her this honour; she is a high-born lady. Therein we honour ourselves."

"Nay, as thou lovest me!" Hagen said. "These knights might deem I did it through fear, and thought to fly. I will not rise from my seat for any of them. It beseemeth us better to sit still. Shall I show honour to her that hateth me? That I will never do, so long as I be a living man. Certes, I care little if King Etzel's wife misliketh me."

Hagen, the overweening man, laid a bright weapon across his knee, from the hilt whereof shone a flaming jasper, greener than grass. Well Kriemhild knew that it was Siegfried's.

When she saw the sword, her heart was heavy. The hilt was of gold, the scabbard of red brodered silk. It minded her on her woe, and she began to weep. Bold Hagen, I ween, had done it apurpose.

Brave Folker drew closer to him on the bench a stark fiddle-bow, mickle and long, made like a sword, sharp and broad. There sat the good knights unafraid. They deemed them too high to rise from their seat through fear of any.

Then the noble queen advanced to them and gave them angry greeting. She said, "Now tell me, Sir Hagen, who sent for thee, that thou hast dared to ride into this land? Wert thou in thy senses, thou hadst not done it."

"None sent for me," answered Hagen. "Three knights that I call master, were bidden hither. I am their liegeman, and never yet tarried behind when they rode to a hightide."

She said, "Now tell me further. Wherefore didst thou that which hath earned thee my hate? Thou slewest Siegfried, my dear husband, that I cannot mourn enow to my life's end."

He answered, "Enough! What thou hast said sufficeth. It was I, Hagen, that slew Siegfried, the hero. He paid dear for the evil words that Kriemhild spake to fair Brunhild. I deny not, mighty queen, that I am

guilty, and the cause of all the mischief. Avenge it who will, man or woman. I will not lie; I have wrought thee much woe."

She said, "Ye hear him, knights! He denieth not the wrong he hath done me. I care not how he suffer for it, ye men of Etzel."

The proud warriors glanced at each other. Had there been fighting, the two comrades had come off with honour, as oft aforetime in strife. What the Huns had undertaken they durst not perform, through fear. Then said one among them, "Why look ye at me? My word was vain; I will lose my life for the gifts of no woman. King Etzel's wife, methinketh, would undo us."

Another said, "I am of thy mind. I would not challenge this fiddler for towers full of red gold, for much I mislike his fierce glances. This Hagen, too, I knew in his youth, and need not to be told concerning him. In two-and-twenty battles I have seen him. He hath given many a woman heart's dole. He and the knight of Spain rode on many a foray, and here, by Etzel, won many victories to the honour of the king. Wherefore none may deny him praise. In those days the knight was a child, and they that now are grey were youths. Now he is grown to a grim man. Thereto, he weareth Balmung, which he won evilly.

So they agreed that none should fight, whereat the queen grieved bitterly. The knights turned away, for they feared death from the fiddler, and were dismayed. How oft will cowards fall back when friend standeth true by friend! And he that bethinketh him betimes is delivered from many a snare.

Then said bold Folker, "Now have we seen and heard that foemen are around us. Haste we to the court, to the kings, that none dare fall upon them."

"I will follow," said Hagen.

They went where they found the knights still waiting in the courtyard; and bold Folker began to say to his masters with a loud voice, "How long will ye stand here to be jostled? Go in and hear from the king how he is minded toward you."

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The knights bold and good went in pairs. The prince of Bern took great Gunther of Burgundy by the hand. Irmfried took brave Gernot, and Giselher went in with his father-in-law. Howso the others walked, Folker and Hagen parted nevermore, save once in battle, till their death; the which gave many a noble woman cause to weep. With the kings came their followers, a thousand bold men, and, thereto, sixty warriors, brought by Hagen from his land. Hawart and Iring, two chosen knights, went after the kings, hand in hand. Dankwart and Wolfhart, a true-hearted man, bare them courteously toward them that were present.

When the prince of Rhineland came into the palace, Etzel waited no longer, but sprang up from his seat when he saw them. Never was fairer greeting between kings. "Ye be welcome, Sir Gunther and Sir Gernot, and Giselher your brother. With true heart I sent my service to you at Worms. Your knights, too, are welcome, each one. Glad are my wife and I to greet bold Folker, and also Hagen, in this land. Many a message she sent you to the Rhine."

Then said Hagen of Trony, "I heard them all. Had I not ridden hither for my masters' sake, I had come to do thee honour." Thereupon the host took his dear guests by the hand, and led them to the high seat where he himself sat. And they hasted and poured out mead, morat, and wine, for the guests, in great golden goblets, and bade the strangers heartily welcome.

Then said King Etzel, "I tell you truly that nothing in this world had pleased me better than to see you knights here. It will ease the queen of mickle heart's dole. I marvelled oft what I had done, that, among the many guests I won to my court, ye never came to my land. Glad am I to see you now."

Whereto Rudeger, the high-hearted knight, answered, "Thou rejoicest with cause, for my mistress's kinsmen are men of proven worth, and they bring many valiant knights with them."

It was on a midsummer eve that they came to Etzel's court, and seldom hath been heard such high greeting as

THIRTIETH ADVENTURE

HOW HAGEN AND FOLKER KEPT WATCH

THE day was now ended and the night drew nigh. The way-weary warriors were fain to rest, and lie down on their beds, but knew not how to compass it. Hagen asked, and brought them word.

Gunther said to the host, "God have thee in His keeping. Give us leave to go and sleep. If thou desire it, we will come again early in the morning." Then Etzel parted merrily from his guests.

From all sides the folk pressed in on the strangers. Bold Folker said to the Huns, "How dare ye get before our feet? If ye void not the way, it will be the worse for you. I will give some of you a blow with this fiddle that may cause your friends to weep. Fall back from us warriors. Certes, ye had better. Ye be knights in name and naught else."

While the fiddler spake thus wrothfully, bold Hagen looked over his shoulder and said, "The minstrel giveth you good counsel. Get to your lodging, ye men of Kriemhild. This is no time for your malice. If ye would start a quarrel, come to us to-morrow early, and let us way-weary warriors lie this night in peace. I ween ye will find none readier than we are."

They led the guests to a spacious hall, where they found beds, big and costly, standing ready. Gladly had the queen worked their doom. Coverlets of bright stuffs from Arras were there, and testers of silk of Araby, the goodliest that could be, broidered and shining with gold. The bed-clothes were of ermine and black sahle, for them to rest under, the night through, till the day. In such state never king lay before with his men.

"Woe is me for our lodging!" said Giseller the youth, "and for my friends that came hither with us. My sister

sent us fair words, but I fear we must all soon lie dead through her."

"Grieve not," said Hagen the knight. "I will myself keep watch, and will guard thee well, I trow, till the day. Fear naught till then. After that, each shall look to himself."

They bowed to him and thanked him. They went to their beds, and, or long, the valiant men were lying soft. Then bold Hagen began to arm him.

Folker the fiddler said, "If thou scorn not my help, Hagen, I would keep watch with thee till the morning."

The hero thanked Folker, "God in Heaven quit you, dear Folker. In all my troubles and my straits I desire thee only and no other. I will do as much for thee, if death hinder it not."

They both did on their shining harness. Each took his shield in his hand, and went out before the door to keep watch over the strangers. They did it faithfully.

Brave Folker leaned his good shield against the wall, and went back and took his fiddle, and did fair and seemly service to his friends. He sat down under the lintel upon the stone. There never was a bolder minstrel. When the sweet tones sounded from his strings, the proud homeless ones all thanked him. He struck so loud that the house echoed. Great were his skill and strength both. Then he played sweeter and softer, till he had lulled many a careworn man to sleep. When Folker found they were all asleep, he took his shield in his hand again, and went out and stood before the door, to guard his friends from Kriemhild's men.

About the middle of the night, or sooner, bold Folker saw a helmet in the distance, shining in the dark. Kriemhild's vassals were fain to do them a hurt. Or she sent them forth, she said, "For God's sake, if ye win at them, slay none save the one man, false Hagen; let the others live."

Then spake the fiddler, "Friend Hagen, we must bear this matter through together. I see armed folk before the house. I ween they come against us."

"Hold thy peace," answered Hagen. "Let them

THIRTY-FIRST ADVENTURE

HOW THE BURGUNDIANS WENT TO CHURCH

"My harness is grown so cold," said Folker, "that I ween the night is far spent. I feel, by the air, that it will soon be day."

Then they waked the knights that still slept.

The bright morning shone in on the warriors in the hall, and Hagen began to ask them if they would go to the minster to hear mass. The bells were ringing according to Christian custom.

The folk sang out of tune: it was not mickle wonder, when Christian and heathen sang together. Gunther's men were minded to go to church, and rose from their beds. They did on their fine apparel—never knights brought goodher weed into any king's land. But Hagen was wroth, and said, "Ye did better to wear other raiment. Ye know how it standeth with us here. Instead of roses, bear weapons in your hands, and instead of jewelled caps, bright helmets. Of wicked Kriemhild's mood we are well aware. I tell you there will be fighting this day. For your silken tunics wear your hauberks, and good broad shields for rich mantles, that, if any fall on you, ye may be ready. My masters dear, my kinsmen, and my men, go to the church and bewail your sorrow and your need before great God, for know, of a surety, that death draweth nigh. Forget not wherein ye have sinned, and stand humbly before your Maker. Be warned, most noble knights. If God in heaven help you not, ye will hear mass no more."

So the kings and their men went to the minster. Hagen bade them pause in the churchyard, that they might not be parted. He said, "None knoweth yet what the Huns may attempt on us. Lay your shields at your feet, my friends, and if any give you hostile greeting, answer him with deep wounds and deadly.

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That is Hagen's counsel, that ye may be found ready, as beseemeth you."

Folker and Hagen went and stood before the great minster. They did this, that the queen might be forced to push past them. Right grim was their mood.

Then came the king and his beautiful wife. Her body was adorned with rich apparel, and the knights in her train were featly clad. The dust rose high before the queen's attendants.

When the rich king saw the princes and their followers armed, he said hastily, "Why go my friends armed? By my troth it would grieve me if any had done aught to them. I will make it good to them on any wise they ask it. Hath any troubled their hearts, he shall feel my displeasure. Whatso they demand of me I will do."

Hagen answered, "None hath wrought us annoy. It is the custom of my masters to go armed at all hightides for full three days. If any did us a mischief, Etzel should hear thereof."

Right well Kriemhild heard Hagen's word. She looked at him from under her eyelids with bitter hate. Yet she told not the custom of her land, albeit she knew it well from aforetime. Howso grim and deadly the queen's anger was, none had told Etzel how it stood, else he had hindered what afterward befell. They scorned, through pride, to tell their wrong.

The queen advanced with a great crowd of folk, but the twain moved not two hands' breadth, whereat the Huns were wroth, for they had to press past the heroes. This pleased not Etzel's chamberlains, and they had gladly quarrelled with them, had they dared before the king. There was much jostling, and nothing more.

When mass was over, many a Hun sprang to horse. With Kriemhild were also many beautiful maidens. Kriemhild sat by Etzel at a window with her women, to see the bold warriors ride, the which the king loved to do. Ha! many a stranger knight spurred below in the court!

The marshal brought out the horses. Bold Dankwart had gathered together his master's followers from Bur-

gundy. Well-saddled horses were led up for the Nibelungs. When the kings and their men were mounted, Folker counselled them to joust after the fashion of their country. Full knightly they rode in the tourney. The counsel was welcome to all, and a mighty din and clang of arms soon arose in the great tilt-yard, while Etzel and Kriemhild looked on.

Sixty of Dietrich's knights spurred forward to meet the strangers. They were eager for the onset, had Dietrich allowed it, for goodly men were his. But it irked him when he heard thereof, and he forbade them to cross lances with Gunther's warriors. He feared it might go hard with his knights.

When the knights of Bern were gone out of the yard, five hundred of Rudeger's men of Hethlaren rode up before the castle, with their shields. The Margrave had been better pleased if they had stayed away. He pressed through the crowd, and said to them that they themselves knew how that Gunther's men were wroth, and that he would have them quit the tourney.

When these also had gone back, they say that the knights of Thuringen and a thousand bold Danes rode in. Then the splinters flew from the lances. Imfried and Hawart rode into the tourney. The Rhinelanders met them proudly. They encountered the men of Thuringen in many a joust; pierced was many a shield.

Sir Blodel came on with three thousand. Etzel and Kriemhild saw plainly all that passed below. The queen rejoiced, by reason of the hate she bore the Burgundians. She thought in her heart,—what happed or long—"If they wounded any, the sport might turn to a battle. I would fain be revenged on my foes, certes, it would not grieve me."

Schruotan and Gibek came next, and Ramung and Hornbog, after the manner of the Huns. They all bore them boldly before the Burgundians. High over the king's palace flew the splinters. Yet all they did was but empty sound. Gunther's men made the house and the castle ring with the clash of shields. They won great honour. So keen was their pastime that the foot-cloths

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ran with the sweat of the horses, as they rode proudly against the Huns.

Then said stout Folker the fiddler, "These knights dare not confront us, I ween. I have heard that they hate us. They could not have a fitter time to prove it."

"Lead the horses to their stalls," said the king. "Toward evening ye may ride again, if there be time for it. Haply the queen may then give the prize to the Burgundians."

At that moment a knight rode into the lists, prouder than any other Hun. Belike he had a dear one at the window. He was rich apparelled like a bride.

Folker said, "I cannot help it. Yonder woman's darling must have a stroke. None shall hinder me. Let him look to his life. I care not how wroth Etzel's wife may be."

"Nay now, for my sake," said the king. "The folk will blame us if we begin the fray. Let the Huns be the first. It were better so."

Still Etzel sat by the queen.

"I will join thee in the tourney," cried Hagen. "It were well that these women and these knights saw how we can ride. They give Gunther's men scant praise."

Bold Folker spurred back into the lists. Thereby many a woman won heart's dole. He stabbed the proud Hun through the body with his spear. Many a maid and many a wife was yet to weep for it. Hagen and his sixty knights followed hard on the fiddler. Etzel and Kriemhild saw it all plain.

The three kings left not the doughty minstrel alone among his foemen. A thousand knights rode to the rescue. They were haughty and overweening, and did as they would.

When the proud Hun was slain, the sound of weeping and wailing rose from his kinsmen. All asked, "Who hath done it?" and got answer, "It was Folker, the bold fiddler."

The friends of the Hunnish Margrave called straightway for their swords and their shields, that they might kill Folker. The host hastened from the window.

was a mighty uproar among the Huns. The kings and their followers alighted before the hall, and beat back their horses.

Then came Etzel and began to part the fray. He seized a sharp sword out of the hand of one of the Hun's kinsmen that stood nigh, and thrust them all back. He was greatly wroth. "Ye would have me fail in honour toward these knights! If ye had slain this minstrel, I tell you I would have hanged you all. I marked him well when he slew the Hun, and saw that it was not with intent, but that his horse stumbled. Let my guests leave the tilt-yard in peace."

He gave them escort, himself, and their horses were led to the stalls, for many varlets stood ready to serve them.

The host went with his guests into the palace, and bade the anger cease. They set the table, and brought water. The knights of the Rhine had stark foemen enow. Though it irked Etzel, many armed knights pressed in after the kings, when they went to table, by reason of their hate. They waited a chance to avenge their kinsman.

"Ye be too unmannerly," said the host, "to sit down armed to eat. Whoso among you toucheth my guests shall pay for it with his head. I have spoken, O Huns."

It was long or the knights were all seated. Bitter was Kriemhild's wrath. She said, "Prince of Bern, I seek thy counsel and thy kind help in my sore need."

But Hildebrand, the good knight, answered, "Who slayeth the Nibelungs shall do it without me; I care not what price thou offerest. None shall essay it but he shall rue it, for never yet have these doughty knights been vanquished."

"I ask the death of none save Hagen, that hath wronged me. He slew Siegfried, my dear husband. He that chose him from among the others for vengeance should have my gold without stint. I were inly grieved did any suffer save Hagen."

But Hildebrand answered, "How could one slay him alone? Thou canst see for thyself, that, if he be set

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upon, they will all to battle, and poor and rich alike must perish."

Said Dietrich also, courteously, "Great queen, say no more. Thy kinsmen have done naught to me that I should defy them to the death. It is little to thine honour that thou wouldst compass the doom of thy kinsmen. They came hither under safe conduct, and not by the hand of Dietrich shall Siegfried be avenged."

When she found no treachery in the knight of Bern, she tempted Blædel with the promise of a goodly estate that had been Nudung's. Dankwart slew him after, that he clean forgot the gift.

She said, "Help me, Sir Blædel. In this house are the fers that slew Siegfried, my dear husband. If any avenge me, I will ever serve him."

Blædel, that sat by her, answered, "I dare not show thy kinsmen such hate, so long as my brother showeth them favour. The king would not forgive me if I defied them."

"Nay now, Sir Blædel, I will stand by thee, and give thee silver and gold for meed, and, thereto, a beautiful woman, the widow of Nudung. that thou mayest have her to thy dear one. I will give thee all, land and castle, and thou shalt live joyfully with her on the march that was Nudung's. In good sooth I will do what I promise."

When Blædel heard the fee, and because the woman pleased him for her fairness, he resolved to win her by battle. So came he to lose his life.

He said to the queen, "Go back into the hall. Or any is ware thereof, I will raise a great tumult. Hagen shall pay for what he hath done. I will bring thee King Gunther's man bound."

"Now arm ye, my men," cried Blædel, "and let us fall on the foemen in their lodging. King Etzel's wife giveth me no peace, and at her bidding we must risk our lives."

When the queen had left Blædel to begin the fight, she went in to table with King Etzel and his men. She had woven an evil snare against the guests.

I will tell you now how they went into the hall. Crowned kings went before her; many high princes and knights of worship attended the queen. Etzel assigned to all the guests their places, the highest and the best in the hall. Christians and heathens had their different meats, whereof they ate to the full; for so the wise king ordered it. The yeomen feasted in their own quarters, where sewers served them, that had been charged with the care of their food. But revel and merriment were soon turned to weeping.

Kriemhild's old wrong lay buried in her heart, and when the strife could not be kindled otherwise, she bade them bring Etzel's son to table. Did ever any woman so fearful a thing for vengeance?

Four of Etzel's men went straightway and brought in Ortlieb, the young king, to the princes' table, where Hagen also sat. Through his murderous hate the child perished.

When Etzel saw his son, he spake kindly to his wife's brethren, "See now, my friends, that is my only son, and your sister's child. Some day he will serve you well. If he take after his kin, he will be a valiant man, rich and right noble, stark and comely. If I live, I will give him the lordship of twelve countries. Fair service ye may yet have from young Ortlieb's hand. Wherefore I pray ye, my dear friends, that, when ye ride back to the Rhine, ye take with you your sister's son, and do well by the child. Rear him in honour till he be a man, and when he is full grown, if any harry your land, he will help you to avenge it." Kriemhild, the wife of Etzel, heard all that the king said.

Hagen answered, "If he grow to be a man, he may well help these knights. But he hath a weakly look. Methinketh I shall seldom go to Ortlieb's court."

The king eyed Hagen sternly, for his word irked him. Albeit he answered not again, he was troubled, and heavy of his cheer. Hagen was no friend to merriment.

The king and his liegemen disliked sore what Hagen had said of the child, and were wroth that they must

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Loud cried Dankwart to the squires and yeomen. "Ye see that we are undone. Fight for your lives, ye homeless ones, that ye may lie dead without shame."

They that had not swords seized the benches, and caught up the stools from the floor. The squires of Burgundy were not slow to answer them. With these they dented many a helmet.

The homeless youths made grim defence. They drove the armed men from the house. Yet five hundred and more lay therein dead. They were red and wet with blood.

This heavy news reached Etzel's knights. Grim was their grief that Blædel and his men were slain by the brother of Hagen, and the squires. Or Etzel knew anything of the matter, two thousand Huns or more did on their armour and hasted thither, for so it must needs be, and left not one alive. These false knights brought a mighty host before the house. The strangers defended them well; but what availed their prowess? They had all to die. Or long the fray waxed grimmer yet.

Now shall ye list to marvels and wondrous deeds. Nine thousand squires lay dead, and twelve of Dankwart's men. He stood alone among his foes. The noise was hushed, the din had ceased. Dankwart looked over his shoulder and cried, "Woe is me for the friends I have lost! Among my foemen I stand alone."

Swords now fell upon his body. Many a hero's wife was yet to weep for it. He raised his buckler, and lowered the thong, and wetted many a hauberk with blood.

"Woe is me for this wrong!" cried Aldrian's child. "Stand back, ye knights of Hungary, and let me to the air, that it cool a battle-weary man." Then he began, in their despite, to hew his way to the door.

When he sprang from the house, how many a sword rang on his helmet! They that had not seen the wonders of his hand fell upon him there.

"Would to God," said Dankwart, "I had a messenger to tell my brother Hagen in what peril I stand! He would help me hence, or die by me."

But the Hunnish knights answered, "Thou, thyself, shalt be the messenger, when we carry thee in dead to thy brother. So shall Gunther's man first hear of his loss. To Etzel thou hast done grievous hurt."

He said, "Keep your threats, and stand back, or I will wet the harness of some of you. I will bear the news myself to the court, and bewail my great wrong to my masters."

He did Etzel's men such scathe, that they durst not draw against him. Then they shot so many darts into his shield that he must drop it for heaviness.

They thought to vanquish him without his shield. Hal what deep wounds he made in their helmets! Many a bold man staggered before him. Great honour and praise were Dankwart's. From both sides they sprang at him. I ween they were too hasty. He fought his way through his foemen like a wild bear in the forest through the hounds—bolder he could not have been. His path was ever wet anew with hot blood. When did single knight withstand foemen better? Proudly Hagen's brother went to court.

The sewers and the cup-bearers heard the ^{clash} of swords. Many dropped the drink and the ^{fill} carried. On the stairs he found stark enemies.

"How now, ye sewers?" cried the wear ^{the minstrel} it had the "see to the guests, and bear in the good news love you. lords, and let me take my message to my master the king's

They that had the hardshood, and sprang ^d yet call him from the stairs, he smote so fiercely with his ^{that} that they fell back for fear. With his strength